



Bracebridge,
Atherstone Hall.



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THE
LETTERS
O F
Monsieur l' Abbe de Bellegarde,
TO A
LADY
OF THE
Court of *France*,

On some Curious and Usefull
Subjects.

Done in English.

With a PREFACE, by the
Translator giving an Account of the
Author, and some Peculiar things
in his Writings ; of the French manner
of Writing and Expression, compar'd
with the English ; Of the general
desire and study of Knowledge in
the French Ladies, &c.

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THE
REVIEW

OF THE LITERATURE OF
THE PRESENT AGE.

Y D A T

THE MONTHLY

REVIEW OF
LITERATURE,
ARTS, & SCIENCES,
HISTORICAL, POLITICAL,
AND LITERARY.



BY THE EDITOR OF THE
LITERARY REVIEW, DIVIDED INTO SEVERAL
DISTINCT PARTS; THE LITERARY, HISTORICAL,
POLITICAL, AND SCIENTIFIC; WITH
ADDITIONS OF THE LITERATURE OF
THE PRESENT AGE; AND A HISTORY OF
THE LITERATURE OF KNOWLEDGE IN
THESE ISLES.

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THE
Translator's Preface

HE that Translates an useful Book as he reaps the Pleasure and advantage Improving his Knowledge in two Languages, and imprinting the Sense and Subject more deeply in his own Mind; so he does as true a Service to the Publick as the first Writer. Cicero and the greatest Men of all Ages have been mov'd by such Considerations to bestow some labour in Translating; and have given it so much Reputation and Authority by their examples, that I hope such a One as I am needs no other

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reason to Justify my Translating an
Author, whose Thoughts ought not
to be confin'd to one Language and
whose Writings have met with so Ge-
neral an Approbation in the Orig-
inal, and have been so often reprinted
with great Applause in France
and Holland.

I chuse to begin with this small
Volume of Letters by reason of the
great Variety of Subjects that are
handled in them, and the easy and
Natural manner in which they are
Written. This I hope, may be a-
greeable to all sorts of Readers,
and prove an useful and innocent
Amusement in a time of War and
Distraction, when the greatest Lo-
vers of Knowledge cannot give the
Time or Attention, necessary for
long and laborious Studies.

Large and Accurate Treatises
are fit only for the Calm and Se-
cure, OR about the rene
and Dost

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rene times of Peace and Quiet.
War is as Mortal an Enemy to
Learning as to Laws and Com-
merce. Calamities, and losses of
Blood and Treasure, bring a damp
on Men's Spirits. The meanest
Tradesman then turns Politician,
and Railing and Revenge is the
Universal Study. It is not my
business to meddle with State Af-
fairs, or to dispute the Lawfulness
of War among Christians; But I
own I am not an Admirer of the
State of War, and since so many
Precautions are necessary, in the
Judgment of all good Men, to justify
a War first as Lawful, and then
as Prudent, I hope I may say that,
Blessed are the Peace-Makers.
I am sorry that the Accomplish-
ment of Esaiah's Prophecy is not
yet come, and I long extremely to
see the happy Metamorphosis of
our Swords and Spears into more

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harmless and more useful Instruments.

During this dismal Tumult of War and Confusion, that which cheats and wheedles us most handsomly into a little knowledge, may be the most acceptable. We must amuse our selves the best way we can, and be contented with light and easy Dishes, when our Stomach is not in a Condition to receive more solid Nourishment. Montaigne, or Voiture, in this Case, may be more seasonable than Archimedes, or Plato; and the comprehensive Variety of short Essays and Instructing Letters, may afford more Pleasure than the profound and excellent Speculations of Sir Isaac Newton, or Doctor Cheyne.

These Letters of our Author being written to a Lady, on Subjects of her own Choosing, were design'd to

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to please and divert, as well as to Instruct. And the happy Mixture of Pleasant and Profitable, the Utile Dulci, has always been considered as the most perfect Composition.

The first thing that distinguish'd Monsieur l' Abbé de Bellegarde was his Treatise Sur le Ridicule, on Ridiculousness, or the various ways by which Men expose themselves, and how to avoid it. Another which he wrote upon Politeness, increas'd his Reputation and the esteem of the Publick for every thing that bears his Name. These Letters are Written with the same Spirit, and in the same style and manner. Plain and Natural Observations, in an easy and unaffected Dress: For that is the essential Rule, at present, of the French Eloquence; to be Clear and Perspicuous, and so to speak as to be Understood by every body. In

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In this Point, one may safely say that France is in the Right, For the very Use and Design of Words being to express our Thoughts, he undoubtedly, who makes himself most easily Understood, has the greatest Art of Expression.

The great Pattern and Master of the Roman Eloquence chose to be Redundant rather than Obscure. Horace approves the Maxim, tho' he condemns the Extreme on the other hand. Scarcely any Man has so deprav'd a Taste, or affects such a Singularity, as not to own how much more he is delighted with the Clear and Gentle Stream of Cæsar's Expression, than to sweat and Labour to exert the Close and Obstinate sense of Tacitus. Ther are the same Differences, in proportion, in o-

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ther Authors, and upon other Subjects.

I have made this particular Reflection, both for our Author's honor, and likewise to justify my own Translation. He speaks Plain, and Intelligible; and I have endeavour'd faithfully to Imitate him, without the least straining for Ornaments or Artificial Beauties. Writing and Pleading and Preaching, being Imitations and Pictures of Familiar Conversation, that which is most easy and natural is most agreeable to all Persons, but especially to the best Judges. And it is impossible that either a dark and affected Air, or a gaudy dress, can be Ornaments in a Copy, which are Deformities in the Original.

Beauty to my Taste, is infinitely more agreeable in the Cleanliness

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of it's own Natural Dress, than when it is trickt up for the Stage with Powder and Patch and Painting and all the Ornaments of Cleopatra. And since I have made this comparison, pray let me fortify it by no less an Authority than that of Cicero, who thought he could not give a higher Character of some of the best Writings of his time, than that they were *Ornata, hoc ipso quod Ornamentata neglexerant;* & ut *Mulieres, ideo bene Olere,* quia nihil oleabant, videbantur: Beautiful and well adorn'd, because they neglected Ornaments; as those Women smell best, who smell of Nothing.

It was the opinion of Socrates, that every Man is Eloquent enough in that which he understands. If his own thoughts are Clear, and his intention Honest, he will find no great diffi-

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difficulty to express his mind to others. Either Ignorance or Knavery is most commonly the Source of Obscure and Artificial ways of Speaking: And Ciceron brings it as a demonstration that Mucius was an honest Lawyer, and a man of Honour, Dixit Mucius more suo, nullo apparatu, Pure & Dilucide. Mucius pleaded in his own Stile, without any Ornament, but that of Purity and Clearnels.

But I would not be thought to condemn the proper and apposite Beauties of Expression, or an honest Eloquence. All that I advance is plainly this, That where a Man has any thoughts that are worth the Communicating, the more Naturally he does it, the better ; and that wherever one is persuaded of any Truth in his own breast, the properst and most beautiful Eloquence he can possibly use to persuade others,

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is to lay those Reasons distinctly before them, in their natural force and vigour, by which himself was persuad'd : For being truly convinc'd, and entering honestly and clearly into his own Subject, he can be at no great loss to find the channels of conveying his thoughts to others. Words naturally flow into our Ideas, with every Object ; and they are obedient, and ready to be call'd out, to execute their Office.

It must be own'd, For, as Mr. Dryden says ; he wants worth who dares not praise a Foe, that the French seem to excell in this point of Clearness and Perspicuity of Expression. Their greatest Masters have so recommended it ; both by reason, and own their example, that now it is become familiar to their Authors of all Rates, and it is thought a piece of ill Breeding to put the Reader to any Pain to find out their Meaning. A

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A servile and Laborious Industry in hammering our Notions, and to Crowd and Ramass a great deal of meaning into a little Compass, is a very needless Torture to the Author himself, but creates a much greater to the Reader who must Stare, and Meditate, and Revolve, and wants a Microscope to discover and unriddle the close and Mysterious Composition.

I do not deny that the French have a great many Trifling Writers, and there are too many such in all writing Countries; tho' indeed nothing can be more Impertinent than to tease and amuse the Reader with a multitude of words, which tho' every one of them singly may be clear and Intelligible, yet all put together, express only some Airy nothing or a Trifle. But that is the fault of the Understanding, and not of the Expression. Still the de-

sign

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sign of Perspicuity is commendable ;
and even Whip-Cream is Cream,
which is both more agreeable and
wholesome than a Piece of Cheese,
and not so much chang'd from it's
Natural Quality and Sweetness.

But the trifling Authors of that
Country come not under the present
Consideration : And I would not
have the best of their Writers out-
shine our own, in any kind of Per-
fection. The Romans had very
much the same Opinion of the Greeks
as we have now of the French ;
yet they Studied with the utmost
Application to imitate the Sweet-
ness and Perspicuity of their Lan-
guage, and the greatest of the Ro-
man Orators were bred in Greece
and form'd by the Grecian Masters
of Eloquence and Learning. Our
Natural Aversion does not hinder
us from apeing our Neighbours in
their Perriniggs, their Fashions of
Cloathes,

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Cloathes, and the greatest part of their other Trifles ; and pray why should we be ashamed to Imitate them in more reasonable and solid Matters ?

I do not design the least Injustice to the Merit of some great Masters of Expression and Eloquence in the English Language, the Comparison is only of the Generality of the two Nations. After the Restoration of Right and Sense and Good Breeding and Politeness with the Politest Prince and most Accomplish'd Gentleman in Christendom, such a Noble Constellation of Lights appear'd in this Country, that it might truly be said, without vanity, that the Court of K. Charles, so far to the North of Rome, was nothing inferior to that of Augustus, in the Seat and Splendor of the Empire. Nor is it easy to imagine how the Wit of Man is capable to out-do our

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Rochesters, our Dorsets, our Buckinghams, our Mulgraves, our Sidleys, our Drydens and L'Estranges; or in other Spheres, our Finches, our Sprats, our Tilts, lotsons, &c.

I wish it could be said that the Generality had justly endeavour'd to imitate their Perfections; or that we had as great a Number of Shining Lights at present. We were surfeited with Wit, as we were with Riches. Plenty abused became our greatest Plague, and a wanton Abundance bred our Diseases. Politicks and Faction have sower'd our Blood, and corrupted the Natural Talents of too many.

But our Eclipse is not Total. We have still some Great and Happy Masters of Thought and Expression: Some who dare be Witty without Railing, and Eloquent without being Seditious: Some who dare

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dare be easy in their own breast, and in their serene and liberal Souls consult and promote the real Good and Pleasure of Mankind. Some who can rise to the sublimest height of thought, without either going out of fight, or thundering. Some who can Sing our Battles with the same Spirit with which Cæsar fought, and with the same Clearness and Presence of understanding. We have both a Homer and a Horace happily United in one Person. And if I point at Mr. Prior on this Occasion, it is not to take off from the Merit of others, but to Excite them the more to support as he does the Credit and Lustre of the Age and Nation.

Having once mentioned this great Quality of Clearness and Perspicuity in Writing, the nature of the Subject led me to this Dissertation. But [now to return to our

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Author. As his Expression is plain and easy, his Observations are Natural and Just. They are drawn from the true and proper Fountain, a great knowledge of the World and of Mankind.

Observations of that Nature are incomparably more useful to all sorts of Readers than the more refin'd Notions of Science and Speculation. The whole Course of our Life, with the utmost Care and Exactness we are capable of, and the most mature Experience, are all little enough to bring us to the knowledge of our selves. It is that kind of Truth that lies deepest in the Pit. Very few get beyond the Surface : And even after all our most Accurate discoveries, we fall into gross Mistakes dayly, and find new Imperfections in our selves or others. A limited understanding, imprison'd in Matter, and Chain'd

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to the Company of Senses and Passions, is a bottomless Abyss and Source of Error. But he is the happiest and wisest Man who attains to the greatest perfection in this Knowledge of himself and of Human Nature. Yet perhaps, Monsieur de la Rochefoucault's Maxim may be very true, That the greatest part of Mankind are made Unhappy by Reflection. But pray whose fault is that ? To see our Errors, without correcting them, is only to see and hate our own Deformity, and to render us more Guilty and Inexcusable. The Beasts are happier, in their Indolent and Stupid Insensibility.

In all that our Author has Writ, tho his chief design is to observe the Errors of Conversation and to improve Civil Society ; and tho' there is a peculiar Freedom in all his Reflexions, yet his Maxims

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are so far from being inconsistent
with the solid Rules of Morality
or Religion, that, on the contrary,
he keeps those still in his View, and
never Varies from that Compass.
There cannot be a more absurd
Mistake than to imagine that a
well bred Man must be a Liber-
tine. Immorality is an Affront
done to our Highest Superiors ; a
contempt of the Laws of God and
Man ; and therefore can there be
a more brutal piece of Ill breed-
ing ?

I have just now observ'd that
there is a peculiar Liberty in our
Author's Reflexions : And indeed
there is one kind of Liberty which
perhaps may recommend him par-
ticularly to English Readers, as it
has done to the Dutch ; because it
is what we do not expect from a
French-man : For we consider them
all to be Slaves, as well in their
Un-

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Understanding as their Condition.
Now this Author not only takes all occasions, but sometimes goes out of his way, to speak of the Natural Freedom and Equality of Mankind ; of the Origin of Kings, and how Men came to submit to Masters ; of the Fitness of Women for Government ; of the Injustice of Excluding them from it, and where that has been done in some places, that perhaps it will not be of long Duration, and that Natural Right may again prevail ; &c.

Some of these Doctrines, one would think might be proper to be Preach'd at Amsterdam, and some of them at London, rather than at Paris. Yet there he has publish'd them, not only with safety, but with Reputation. One that has not liv'd some time in France,

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to have a more extensive Acquaintance than our Travellers commonly use to have, Fancies that a French Man dares not open his Mouth about Government, but in the Obsequious Stile of Slavery. But this is a very great mistake, tho' a very Vulgar one. No people in the World speak more freely, tho' they do it not in Scurrilous Language, nor with sound of Trumpet. It is true, Intriguing or Acting is dangerous; but as to Discourse or Speculation, Henry the 4th's Maxim is still in Force, Do they Pay their Taxes? Then let them talk as they please. They reason freely on Government like other Men, tho' without Railing or Sedition; and the Present King is not yet so Jealous as Tiberius was, who punished a Roman for speaking ill of Agamemnon.

These

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These Letters having been writ
for the Use of French Ladies, I
shall think it a Happiness if my
Endeavours to render them into
English proves an Acceptable Ser-
vice to the Ladies of this Country.
I see no reason, but mere Custom
and Prejudice, why our Women
should not have the same Curiosity
and Desire of Knowledge, and be as
Considerable and as much Esteem'd
in this Point, as the Women of
France. Their Capacity is nothing
Inferior, and they might have the
same Advantages of Improvement
if Vulgar Mistakes did not forbid
them the use of those Opportuni-
ties, and if the Tyranny of Custom
did not Condemn them to more
trifling and dangerous Occupati-
ons. A just and firm Resolution
would soon surmount the Vulgar Ob-
jections. They value themselves on
Imitating the French Ladies in

The Translator's
Dancing and Dressing ; and why
are they not inspir'd with a more
noble Emulation ? Why suffer the
Others to surpass them in any thing
that is Honourable or Useful ? Shall
one of the greatest Perfections and
Ornaments of Human Nature be
reckon'd a fault or Blemish in the
Women ?

The difficulties of their attain-
ing to knowledge are Imaginary,
and the common Prejudices and
Objections are ridiculous. No-
thing is wanting but that Women
of Judgment and Understanding
give Authority to so just a design,
by more frequent and bold examples ;
for which they have so illustrious
Precedents in the French Ladies.

Amongst them, knowledge and
Learning are in Honor and Repu-
tation. The greatest part, who have
any Time or Opportunities, study
something. And great Numbers
of

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of them, of all Qualities, make considerable Progress.

The Dutches of Maine, to whom our Author Dedicates these Letters, is a great Reader, and a great Patroness of Learned Men and Learning. The Princess Dowager of Conti, who owes so much to Nature, has been at Pains to improve it by Study and Reading. The Dutches of Bourbon is admir'd for the brightness and Gayety of her Wit and Humour, as well in her Songs, as in her Letters and Conversation. The Marquise de l' Hopital is known to have examined and corrected her Husbands most elaborate Mathematical Writings and Calculations; and to shew the respect she has for our Authors she has studied and understands our Language. Madam Dacier assisted her Husband in his curious Criticisms on the Greek and Latine Authors.

Ma-

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Mademoiselle l'Heritier has gain'd several prizes of Poesie, from some Academies of Beaux Esprits; and was chosen, some years since, a Member of the Society at Tholouze. Whoever pleases may read the Letter of Invitation, by Monsieur Laborie, the Secretary, in name of the Society, with her most Ingenious Answer to it, and her acceptance of that Honour. The Works of Madam de Scuderi; of the Comtesse de la Suze; of Madam des Houillieres, and of Mademoiselle la Charfe, have got them Immortal Reputation.

But examples are Innumerable: And I shall Leave this uncommon Subject to the Consideration of our English Ladies, who I hope will endeavour to bring down the Exorbitant Power of France, in this point also. They have the Advantage of a Female-Reign for their Encou-

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Encouragement ; and nothing is
Impossible under such a Queen
whose Education and Merit, as well
as her Birth, have fitted Her for
the highest Character and Example
in every Thing.

THE

Author's Preface

There is no need of a long Preface to give an account of the design, and the disposition, and the several Subjects of these Letters, or the occasion of writing them. The Letters that are address'd to the Author, are so many particular Prefaces, which shew in few words what is to be treated of in the Answers. It appears that a Lady of the Court, who loves Reading, and has a Taste for the Belles Lettres, being obliged to pass some time in the Country, to repair and adorn a House she has near to Paris, and being apprehensive of the Loneliness of Retirement, thought fit to ask of this Author, Reflections on some Subjects which she choos'd herself, as most proper to amuse and divert her, whilst she liv'd amongst Carpenters, Glaziers and Painters, who wrought in her house. At first she consider'd these Letters as a mere Amusement, but afterwards being per-
suaded

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swaded that they might be somewhat useful and agreeable to others, she has desir'd that they may be Printed, believing that the things which are treated in them, are proper Subjects for the best Companies and the Politest Conversation. It was observ'd in the Reflections on Ridiculousness that the reason why some Women Love so much to talk, is because they know nothing. Tho' this Maxim, at first sight may seem to be a Paradox, yet nothing is more certain. As there is nothing in their Understanding, every thing that strikes their Senses employs them, and becomes the subject of their Conversation. Whatever they see, or hear; the Noise that's about them; their pleasures; their Chagrine; their domestick affairs which the Publick has no concern to hear; their Intrigues and their quarrels, are inexhaustible fonds of Discourse. Provided that you speak only of Trifles, they have enough to furnish out the Conversation. But on the contrary, those who know a great deal, and have their Minds fully stor'd with what is Solid and Useful, do not venture so easily to speak. That which comes first into their Thought, does not seem considerable enough to be advanc'd in good Company, and they choose rather to be silent than to say things that are trifling. The Ladies therefore may find in these

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these Letters wherewith to entertain one another with some pleasure, that they may not be always speaking of Gowns and Petticoats, of Rain and the Weather, and a thousand other frivolous things which are poor and ridiculous Subjects of Discourse. But neither must one set up for Learning in Conversation. Those who prepare before hand what they are to say, and come full freighted with fine Phrases and pretty expressions, very often become nauseous, with all their tours of Elegance. One that wou'd be agreeable, must go along with the Stream, and not force the Conversation to that which he had got by heart. In the mean time, when one has any usefull and proper thing to say, he ought to communicate it to the Company without any Ceremony, to please and divert them, and he needs not be afraid to be thought a Pedant. The Subjects of these Letters are things that are fit for Persons of Quality, who love to say and to hear what is usefull and agreeable.

A TABLE
OF THE
Subjects of the Following
LETTERS.

I.

WHerein the True Taft consists.
Of deprav'd Tafts. Errors in Taft
or Choice, which are to be avoided.
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rectify and adjust it, &c. Page 1

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III.

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the Moderns

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LET.

LETTERS

BY

Monsieur L'Abbé de Bellegarde,

ON SOME

Curious Points of LEARNING
and MORALITY.In ANSWER, to Letters of a
Lady of the Court of France:

First Letter.

By the Lady, to *Monsieur L'Abbé de Bellegarde.*

SIR,

IT is very true that those who have nothing to do, can neither be quiet themselves nor let others alone. Tho' this life of ours is full enough of trouble, and seems to have

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plea-

pleasure enough too, yet we find so much time on our hands, that often we know not what to do with our selves. In this want of Occupation, I have wished to read something that's new : And having search'd a long time for the most agreeable Subjects, which may be fittest to fill up the Void of my Time, and to divert me, I have at present Pitch'd upon this, of the Nature of a *true Tast*. Some time too I deliberated, as to the person I would choose to write me something on this Subject, and as I would not flatter you, I shall tell you freely that pure Chance decided it. We were reading, My Sister and I, to a great Princess, for whose Quality and Merit we have an Infinite Respect, the *Reflections* you have made on *Ridiculousness*, and upon *Politeness*. We agree'd all three, that you were the Man we wanted. Write Us then something *On a True Tast*; *On a depraved Tast*; *On the means to Govern and adjust the Tast*; *On the difference of Tasts, and their Characters, and from whence this difference proceeds*, &c.

We ask you no exact Dissertation, in the rules of Art; for we desire nothing that requires Application: We seek only to be Amused. Treat this Subject

in a manner that's easy and by loose Reflections : We care not for Order. Now, pray, do not put on a false Modesty. When a Princess desires any thing, she will be Obey'd : Bring no excuses, for I'll receive none. No reasoning, but do what we desire. We would have this, three Weeks hence, to divert us in the Journey we are to make. I'm accused of being Impatient, and it is very true I am, to the highest degree ; so as to be troublesome both to my self and my friends. I love to confess my faults rather than be refused. And to tell you the truth, I have given my word to the Princess, that I should engage you to do what she desires. So acquit your self the best you can, and the soonest. I thank you for the Books you sent me, they have amused me extreamly. I believe I shall become Philosopher, for I find a great deal of pleasure in Reading your Translation of *Epictetus*, tho' I think his Morality very Austere. *Adieu,*

sir, I am

Your most Humble Servant,

Versailles, the
2d. of March.

*la Marquise de ...
B 2 Mon-*

Monsieur L'Abbé de Bellegarde's
ANSWER:

*Shewing wherein a True Taste
 Consists, &c.*

Madam,

IMUST tell you very freely that I find my self no ways capable to satisfy you upon sight, in what you so absolutely require of me. I am not accustom'd to do things *ex tempore*, and tho' perhaps I seem to Write in a manner that's easy, and with some facility, yet I can assure you that what I Write for the Publick, costs me a great deal of Pains and Labour.

You may be convinc'd of it, *Madam*, when I tell you that before I undertake any Work, I Read exactly all the Authors that have Written on that Matter, Ancient and Modern, Greek and Latin. I run over them all, to

fill my Mind with Thoughts suitable to my Subject It is the Method I observe when I have a mind to Write : So that being at present in the Country to restore my Health, having no Books, and tho' I had any, yet being in no condition to Read with any Application ; I do not think it is in my power to succeed in what you demand of me. Here, *Madam*, are very Lawful Excuses, if you would be contented with Reason. But you tell me with an Air of Authority, that you will be Obey'd, without delay ; and that the Princes who desir'd you to Write to me, is not accustom'd to be Refus'd. To this I have not a word to say: I shall Obey you, *Madam*, I shall Write at a venture whatever comes in my mind upon this Subject, without observing of Method, or any exact Regularity ; using the free and disorderly manner I follow'd in the Reflections I Published on *Ridiculousness*, and upon *Politeness*. If this can satisfy you, good and well: But if you are not content, yet at least, *Madam*, I pray make some account of my Obedience, and the implicit Devotion which I shall al-

ways have to whatsoever you shall please to Command me.

You have heard it often said, *Madam*, that there is no disputing of *Tafts*. This Maxim is repeated every moment, tho' few know well what they mean by it. Why are we not to Dispute them, Seeing there are so many odd and deprav'd ones, and so many Fools who judge amiss, and choose always the wrong side? I reckon, *Madam*, you do not much believe this trifling Maxim, because you desire So earnestly to know wherein the right *Tast* consists, and what it is that distinguishes the Good from the Bad. You know a Lady, who has a pleasure in Eating the Leaves of the Oak, Spanish Wax, and Lime and Plaster. History tells us of a Man who could not endure the Singing of Nightingales, but was charm'd with the noise of Frogs; and that he might have this delightful Musick Night and Day, he built a House at the side of a great Ditch, in a Wild and Desert place, where there were no Trees, lest the Birds coming near, shou'd disturb him in the enjoyment of the more delicious harmony of his Frogs. There are thousands of other Instances of *Tafts*,

Tafts as foolish and extravagant : And is it possible, with any reason, to maintain so ridiculous a Maxim, that Tafts are not to be Disputed ?

The Right Taft is of a very large extent, and supposes extraordinary Qualities. It has place every where, and it Seasons every thing. But it is not so common as is believ'd : Thousands of People flatter themselves that they have it very delicate, tho' they only follow their Caprices, and their Prejudices. It is almost impossible to cure such conceited Persons, because of the natural Repugnance we have to own that we are mistaken, and that we judge amiss. But those who have a Taft truly exquisite, are not so impos'd upon by self-conceit, nor blinded with the Opinion of their own Talents, how extraordinary soever they be. A Woman of good Sense, who is very Handsome, is very sensible of her own Beauty, but it is no trouble to her to own that there are others not inferiour to her. A Man that's a Master, and a Judge in his Art, does not consider himself as a Phœnix, and he does Justice to the merit of others. The true Taft governs our Sentiments and our Idea's, and

makes us know and consider our selves to be just what we are.

Can you believe it, *Madam*, that the Tast depends more on our Heart and Inclination, than upon our Understanding? Tho' the most part of Mankind are perswaded of the contrary. But it is certain, that generally our Tast follows our Constitution, our Byass, and our Inclinations, rather than our Reason. And by this means the conduct of our whole Life and affairs is full of mistakes. So that, *Madam*, if you please, I shall tell you my Opinion of the whole matter plainly in two words: I believe our Tast is true and exquisite when it is govern'd by Reason; and on the other side, That those who follow only their Inclination for their Guide, have for the most part a very ill and deprav'd Tast, and in a great measure they are like to the Beasts, which act only by Instinct and Constitution. The right Tast is the effect of right Reason, which takes always the right side, and judges clearly. So that we need not wonder that it is so rare, and that thousands deceive themselves when they vainly imagine that they have it fine and

and excellent. But they do not long deceive others, and their decisions soon expose their weakness. What I consider as most troublesome and ridiculous in them, is, That they will needs be Applauded, and absolutely impose their Sentiments, how odd soever.

In the mean time, *Madam*, I own that since every Man sees and judges after his own manner, and has his own Sphere and Extent of Understanding, we ought to be cautious in condemning the Taste of others, tho' it be contrary to our own. If we saw the Objects in the same point of Perspective, and in the same Position as they see them, we would think that their Reasonings, and their Decisions were just. Before we condemn them, we ought to consider all the Reasons which oblige them to judge as they do: And we may be mistaken after all our Precaution. In every humane affair there is a different Combination of Circumstances seen by different Persons, and these circumstances alter its Nature and Situation. It is therefore a great Error and Temerity to be too apt to censure others that judge otherways than we do. We expose

expose our selves, and shew our own ill Tast, by condemning rashly that of others.

I remember, *Madam*, how much you seem'd astonished, when a certain Man (of a very obscure Original, but who has made a great Fortune, tho' he has but a very ordinary Understanding) took occasion one day, with a great deal of Haughtiness and Opiniatretyness, on a Subje&t he knew nothing of, and which is much above his capacity, to attack the Sentiments of a Man of true Merit and profound Learning, who proposed his Reasons with great modesty. The Fools applauded the Officer of the Treasury. They were struck with his Noife and the Impudence of his Decisions. But you, *Madam*, shruging up your Shoulders despised them, and you could not enough admire either their ridiculous Tast, or their sneaking and servile Complaifance.

It may be said in general, That every body has a Tast for something : Even the meanest of the People, who have no education, and who seem to be Stupid, Reason justly on their own proper affairs, and appear to be refined enough in what concerns their own

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Interest. The Essential Point is, to know ones own Talents, to keep within those bounds, and not to go out of their Sphere. But whether it is capriciousness, or oddness, or error of Taste, every body will needs reason on the Sublimest things, and which are far above their Capacity. There are Thousands of such Persons, and they may be resembled to the Cordonner, who was so considerable in his Art, that the Famous *Apelles* was pleas'd to Draw his Picture. The Shoemaker, who was a Master in his own Trade, found a fault in the Shooes of the Picture: *Apelles* heard his Reasons, submitted, and Corrected what was amiss. But when the Cordonner would needs go on, and Censure the Figure and Proportion of the Leg; Hark ye, *Friend*, said *Apelles*, you forget your self, what you talk of now is above your Sphere.

I think I forget my self too, *Madam*, and go a little too much out of the way, from my purpose. But I told you at the beginning, That I would use the liberty that's allowable in Letters, without observing any order, or considering if what I say in one place would be more proper in another;

another ; in short, banishing all constraint, and the servile exactness of a regular Method.

Tast enters into the most part of the actions of Mankind. It is that which determines to one Profession rather than another. Some have a Tast for Musick and Symphony ; others who are of a brisker Constitution love what is more Noisy ; Drums and Trumpets please them. If you should ask why so many follow Employments which seem so hard and rebuteing ; no other reason can be given, but that they follow their Tast and Inclination, for they might as well embrace another Profession. But indeed they cannot choote better than by following their Inclination, for generally we have best success in that to which our Tast and our Fancy leads us.

It is the Tast that Adorns every thing. The Productions of Art and Invention do excell only in proportion to the right Tast that reigns in them. 'Tis this that raises the Worth of a Piece of *Titian* or *Carrachio*, above the Works of an ordinary Painter. This is what makes our *de Lulli's* Musick so

so much esteem'd, that any other seems languid and dull to us, in comparison of his.

Tast shews it self even in trifles. Some Women plainly dress'd in a Simple ordinary Stuff, only because it is with a true Tast, and a good Air, appear better than others who are dress'd in Gold and Embroidery, where the Tast is not so good. Tho' it is difficult enough to determine wherein it consists, yet we must not think that it depends only on Fancy and Imagination. There is something of reality. There's a certain we know not what, which we are sensible of, which pleases us, and which we cannot define distinctly. It is by the Tast we Judge of Colours, of Smells, of Sciences, of Cloathes, of Buildings, of the Productions of Art and Nature. It serves us for our Guide, and Conducts us every where. Nature is a kind of Harmony, which by a various combination, makes Impression on our Senses, on our Mind, on our Reason, and on our Inclination. Here's the Origin of all the Passions that are excited by the relation that is between our Senses and their Objects: It is this relation and this Sympathy that produces the Pleasure of our

our Sensations. A certain Combination and Proportion of different sounds, which have a relation to our Organ of Hearing, excites in us that pleasant Sensation which we call Harmony and Musick ; as the right mixture of Meats, and Spices, and Sauces, produces that agreeable Tast, which pleases all Persons of a good Palate.

As the Organs are differently disposed in different Persons, so the Objects produce different effects on the Senses. This is the Cause of those natural Aversions which are to be seen in some Persons who cannot suffer the sight or presence of certain Objects. The smell of Snuff, which is become so much *A-la-mode*, and which is used so frequently, even by the Ladies, raises Vapours in some, that turn even to Convulsions. The Smell of Wine, which rejoices and strengthens the most part of Men, turns the Stomach of others, and throws them into fits of Weakness and Swooning; Cinnamon, and Cloves and Sugar, and Truffles, and Champignons, which are in a manner the life of Ragouts, and give them that delicacy of Tast, are objects of aversion to those who are not used to them ; and many can no more Tast them

them than if they were Poyson. It is properly in this that one may reasonably say, that there is no disputing of Tasts, because the same objects excite different Sensations, according to the different disposition of the Fibres ; and that which pleases the Tast of some, gives a disgust and a pain to others.

Here is a piece of Philosophy, Madam, which I confess might very well have been spar'd. You have been a long time acquainted with all those Mysteries ; there being nothing Curious in *Des-Cartes* or any of the modern Philosophers that has escaped your knowledge. But it's connexion with our present Subject, obliged me to mention it.

Not only do Meats and Savours make different Impressions on different Persons, and even on the same person at different times ; But it is very probable that other objects do the same on the other respective Organs. Who can say that the Colour which seems white to one Man, does not appear a quite contrary Colour to another ? As the Signal to Battle makes the Coward look pale and tremble, but increases the ardour of a man of Courage. Perhaps the Eyes of different persons

are

are like so many Glasses cut different ways, so as to change the colurs of the Objects.

There is even as great a difference in our Minds as in our Senses. Two Men think differently of the same object. Those who have a strong and refined Understanding, have just and clear Ideas of Things, and conceive them as they are in themselves: But limited Understandings go no further than the Surface of Things. Too Subtile Wits refine too much, and evaporate in vain imaginations. This diversity proceeds in a great measure from the disposition of the Organs, and the difference of Constitution, and of the Fibres and Substance of the Brain. I am much of the Opinion of an ingenious Man whom you know, Madam, and who has obliged the Publick with so many fine Writings. He says that the Vivacity, the Strength, the Neatness, and the good Sense, which are the essential qualities of a good Understanding, depend very much on the figure and proportion of the Head; on the temperament and substance of the Brain; on the heat of the Bile, fix'd by the Melancholy, and sweetned by the Blood. The Bile gives

gives the Vivacity and penetration. The Melancholy gives the good Sense and Solidity. And the Blood gives the Delicacy, and the Agreeableness. No doubt, all these, tho' purely material, contribute a great deal to the Life and Beauty of our manner of thinking. Whilst the Soul is engag'd and, as it were, enclosed in this Mass of our Body, it depends on the Organs; and when these Organs are rightly dispos'd, they are a great help to the Soul in performing its own Functions. Let one be never so great a Painter, he shall make but indifferent work, if he has not a good Pencil and a good Light, and such other Necessaries.

According to these Principles, you can easily conceive, Madam, why Persons of Quality, for the most part, have more Life, and Wit, and Accomplishment than those of an obscure Condition. For besides that a good Education contributes infinitely to Improve and Polish the Mind, it is certain, that good Food and good Drink, which mix with the Blood and the Humors of the Body, make the parts finer, and more useful for the Operations of the Soul. The nature of the Climate too has no small influence: And

so we see that Northern people generally are more gross and heavy, and not so Active or Lively as those of the Southern and Eastern Countries. *Greece* and *Italy* alone have produced more Great Men, and more famous Authors, in all Arts and Sciences, than all therest of the World together.

I know not Madam, if you'll grant me this proposition, for I have heard you often say, that the works of the Greeks and Romans, make not so much Impression upon you, nor give you so much Satisfaction, as the Writings of our own Nation, which you preferr to all others, not only for Order and Method, but for the Justness, and Salt, and Delicacy of thought and expression. What ever be in that, Madam, for I shall not dispute it with you, yet to be sure, the nature of the Climate is a great help to the perfection of the Mind. What perplexes me most in the matter, and which I can hardly comprehend, is, how the People of the same Country have Wit and Spirit and Sense in some Ages, and yet become weak and dull and almost Stupid in others. The Ages of *Alexander* and *Augustus*, and *Louis* the Great, have been happy Ages, and Fertile in extraordinary Men. It seems that the Spirit and

and Sense of the World, goes sometimes all into one Country, and that the rest of the Earth becomes Rude and Barbarous. But, tho' we ought not to Flatter our selves too much, yet we may say without vanity, that *France* at present has a very large share, and that not only Arts and Sciences, but also Honor and Politeness, are more Cultivated and Encouraged here, than in any other Nation in *Europe*.

As the Vigour of Men's minds, so their good Taste has its times and Vicissitudes. Not long ago the Taste in *France* was very much depraved. Affectations of Wit, and Points, and Punns, had Banished all good Sense. Jingling of words, forc'd Sentences, Equivoques, ends of Verse, Burlesque, and dull Rallies, were the delight of the Court as well as of the common sort. Right reason was almost Buried and stifled under the Nauseous stuff of insipid productions. And it cost a great deal of Struggling and Difficulty, before Reason and good Sense, was able to resume its place, and recover its Credit.

The little care that's taken to form the Reason of Mankind, is the Cause why so few have their Taste refined and adjusted. We give other Masters very

early to Children, they are taught to Sing and to Dance, to make a Reverence with a good Grace, and to walk with a good Air; but the care of forming their Minds is shamefully neglected: Very few think of that, and this is the reason, why the most part of Mankind follow their Caprices and the Impetuosity of a Bizarre humor, rather than the light of knowledge and understanding. Very few too take pains in earnest, to Cure and rectify their Passions. Their concern goes no further than to find out reasons, how to excuse and justify them: Or if they are forc'd to own that they are in the wrong, they tell you that it is not in their Power to do otherways.

It is not enough to know, the Duties of our Condition: We must have courage and Resolution to perform them. But very often we Flatter our selves that the World cannot reproach us with any thing, tho' in the mean time we expose our selves by the grossest Faults to the publick Censure. Vanity and Presumption hinder us to know our selves as we truly are, and to be just to our selves. It depraves our Taste and our understanding; and our unhappy Self-love suggests to us a Thousand false Colours to cover our Faults.

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It would be a very Nice and difficult task to endeavour to reform the Tastes of the most part of Mankind. It would be necessary to change the whole Tour and Disposition of their Minds, and one might as well undertake to change the treats, and the Air of their Faces. But as Art and Care can help our Complexion, soften and Embelish the skin, and take out the Spots; so our Minds may be very much Emprov'd and Beautify'd, by removing the prejudices, and by proposing to our selves the best Patterns and examples which we may imitate securely.

The habitude and knowledge of the World is one of the greatest helps to the forming our Minds. The greatest part of those who are bred at Court, tho' they are not always the Sublimest Genius's, judge more Soundly of things, and reason more just on every Subject, than other men of greater Capacity; because they have the best models daily before their eyes: And a man of an ordinary Understanding, but who knows the World, shall shine in Conversation, where another who has more Wit, and more Learning, but who knows not the World, shall be quite deconcerted. Those who are not bred to the fine and delicate

and Mysterious ways of those of a Court, know not, very often, what to say to them, with all their Learning. They have their heads full of Greek and Latin, of Syllogisms in good form, and of Arguments and Demonstrations; they know the finest and abstruest parts of Mathematics, and a Thousand other things which have no place in the Knowlege and Commerce of the World; But they have no Taste in what concerns the manner and decencies of Life and Conversation.

I have heard you often complain, Madam, that the Company of a certain Person, who has the Reputation of being a very learned Man, is very tiresom and disagreeable when ever he comes to see you. You find him troublesome, and unseasonable, and even somewhat ridiculous. You blame your self for this uneasiness, and you consider this disgust as an effect of a false and Squeamish Delicacy: But it is not you, that's to blame, Madam, it is your *Doctor* himself. And I'm going to tell you what may seem a Paradox, that the most part of those Gentlemen, whom we call the *Learned*, have a very ill Taste; they judge quite wrong, and their Conversation is dull and nauseous, unless you talk to them of the first

first four Ages of the Church: Their language is an odd sort of Jargon, and their Conversation stiff and unpolished. Study begets a Crust and Scum on the Mind, and gives it a wrong turn, till the company of Persons of Breeding, purify and reform it. Better for that sort of Men that they had no merit, for knowing nothing of the World and the Art of pleasing in Conversation, their very Merit becomes Officious and Troublesome.

The Science of living in good Company, and in the World, is, in my opinion, preferable to all others. Its precepts are few, but the practice of them is of difficult Execution, and require the utmost care and vigour of the Mind. We must excuse the mistakes of others, and take them upon our selves; and we must hide our resentment and chagrin by the most handsom appearances of good humour and gayety. *To know how to live, is to know how to constrain ones self without constraining of others.* This is, in few words and in abstract, the best means to please, and the shortest and surest way to gain the good will of all the World. We must learn to shape and fashion and mould our selves

to the occasion, and by an innocent complaisance we must frequently yield to the Caprices and the ill humours of others.

The extream Nicety of some persons, whom every thing offends, is a mark of the weaknes of their mind, which magnifies the objects and gives chimerical causes of Chagrin. And it is also from want of Understanding that we believe we have Extraordinary merit. That foolish Vanity is a kind of Drunkenness which hinders Reflection; and it produces almost the same effects as excess of Wine. We see Objects double: We encrease and magnify our good qualities: We surpass all our Rivals: We esteem our selves only, and we despise all the rest of Mankind. If we are obliged to own that we have some faults, we comfort our selves by turning our Consideration to our Eminent Perfections. We have an extreme Indulgence for our selves, but we treat others with the last severity, We pardon Nothing and we have a Malicious Pleasure in speaking ill of those, who have truly more merit than our selves.

It is the part of a proud Pedant, and not of a Man of Worth or Breeding,

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to censure every thing without mercy. The Criticks are a People without pitty or Compassion. They are always disgusted and out of humor. It may be fit to consult them sometimes, but to follow all their Caprices, were to blot out the finest parts of the most excellent Writings. Their Sentences of Condemnation are so far from being the effect of knowlege or good Taste, that for the most part they proceed from gross Ignorance, from Bizarre humor, or Envy, with an Extravagant self-opinion. But still they willneeds Usurp a Superiority, and they must pass for Masters, cost what it will. They make a Noise and a Bustle; and Fools, who cannot distinguish and yet will be Judging, are Blinded and Carryed away by the Force of an Impudent Galimathias. For this is the misfortune of the best Writings, that a few only understand them, and yet all will Judge of them.

Madam, you are far from this Imperfection. You speak just, upon all sorts of Subjects; but you rarely venture to tell your own Opinion, unless you be pres'd to it. And when you do, it is with so much Reserve and Circumspection that it is hard to tell which is most Charming, the sense and penetration that appears

pears in your Answers, or your extream Modesty. Those who have most knowledge are the most Cautious in giving their Opinion; and they speak of the Compositions of others with a modest Fear, lest they should seem to Magnify their own Learning or Understanding. It is a sign of a good Taste, not to affect to have more Wit than those we converse with, if we would have them to be pleased with us, and to think our Company agreeable. We must proportion our selves to their Capacity, to be on a Level with them, and to give them occasions of shewing what they know.

'Tis the Character of a good and accomplish'd Man, and who knows how to Live, to Contribute all that's in his Power to make all the World content and pleased, and to say nothing that may Chagrine others. And therefore there is not a worse Talent than that of Raillery, where it is Biteing or Exorbitant. Persons of this Temper spare not their best Friends, nor even themselves. I own that the Salt of refin'd Raillery makes one of the greatest Pleasures of Civil Society, but this Salt must be dispersed with great Skill and Circumspection ; for as too much even of good Salt spoils the best

best Dishes, so too much and too bitter Raillery is a sure way to make the Jester odious. Whoever would meddle with this Art, must have an exquisite Taste of what is proper to Tickle and Please Men of Judgment and Understanding.

I may say the same thing, of those who meddle with Praises and Compliments. Such as flatter grossly and bare-fac'd, and who Prostitute their Praises without Choice or Discretion, can never please any Body who has a good Taste. But the most part of Mankind, being blinded by self-conceit and a fond Opinion of their own Merit, they do not perceive that they are Flattered; and, by an Air of Satisfaction, they shew the great Pleasure they have, in what is fulsomely said to them. For those who are full of themselves cannot forbear shewing their Ridiculous Vanity: But indeed those who nourish it by counter-band Praises ought to be punished as Poysoners.

That our Complaisance may be useful and Innocent, it must keep at an equal distance from Rudeness on the one side, and from Flattery on the other. Politeness, Civility, and a desire to please, are essential qualities in Courtiers who would

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vance themselves, and get Esteem and Approbation : But I can never pardon them their false Embraces, their mean Flatteries, and empty offers of Service, with which they Endeavour to Impose on others. There is no sense nor good Taste in those unnatural and servile ways of Complaisance. This does not become Persons of Quality, and it sinks them below themselves, and even below their Inferiors.

It is dangerous to be too Familiar. It is a kind of degrading our selves, and makes us to be less esteem'd. We lose a certain Character of Dignity, which a serious Air, and a prudent Reserve gives us. But we are not to put on an affected Gravity. A seriousness that's too Gloomy or continues too long, is very disagreeable. We must pull off the Mask sometimes, and let Nature shew it self; for it is very unfit to hide our selves too much, under an Artificial outside. I approv'd what you said lately Madam, of a certain Person who's Post and Quality distinguish him very much, and who has truly Worth and Merit, and an Air of Greatness suitable to his high Birth; you said Madam, that he has always something of the Comedian in his Person

son and Meen, which does not become a true Man of Merit.

Those who have a true Taste, are far from Affectation. Their way, their Actions, their Discourse and Conversation, have a natural and easy Air, which runs gently from the Fountain, and is very agreeable. I think it is most particularly in our Discourse, we ought to avoid Affectation: Those eternal Talkers of Wit, those Purists larded with Phrases and affected ways of speaking, are insupportable: Whoever speaks Naturally, speaks well: We ought always to choose those Terms that are most suitable to the Subject, and to observe a proportion between the Thought and the Expression: For, as it would be very Ridiculous to dress up a Dwarf in the Cloaths of a Giant, so it is every bit as much to make use of Lofty Expressions, and High and Affected Phrases for common and ordinary Purposes and Subjects.

Would you believe it, Madam, that the true Taste appears even in the Debauches that Men make? That famous Epicurean, who was the delight of *Nero's* Court, and the Arbiter of his pleasures, before that Prince had abandon'd himself

self to a Mean and shameful Sensuality, it is said of him, that he made Profession of a Polished and Studied Luxury. He was a Man of Wit and Humor; his Voluptuousness was with Spirit and Understanding, and he refin'd on the Point of Pleasure; not like those Drunkards and dull Debauchees, who fill themselves with Wine and Victuals, and who are perpetually talking of how many Bottles they have swallow'd: They boast of it as a Noble exploit, and place a great part of their Merit in it. The Youth at present, are given too much to this Vice, which might be more easily pardon'd in the Dreggs of the People, than in Persons of Quality. But perhaps in a riper Age, they'll have a better Taste, and more reasonable Sentiments; when their heat and thoughtless Impetuosity, is a little over.

A corrupt Taste, if we do not take Care, infects every thing, and spreads as a Poyson amongst all Persons, all Ages, and all Conditions. Some think they have an exquisit Taste, when it is nothing but a Bizarre disgust, which nothing can please, and which finds fault with every thing. Bile and Chagrin change the Colour of the Objects we see.

see. There's a sort of People, that have an inexhaustible Fond of ill Humour, capable to Poyson all the Pleasures of the World. They have a Secret Joy in sowing of Discord and dividing the best Friends, having always some ill to tell the One, of the other. Others, who are not indeed so Wicked, but in my Opinion every bit as Troublesome, are perpetually Groaning under their Misfortunes, and complaining of their Fate, and will needs have others to Pity them. This is their Folly. Let the season be Plentiful or Barren ; Let there be Peace or War, Let the Taxes be doubl'd or diminished ; whatever happens, is to them a perpetual Fond of Lamentations.

The depraved Taste appears chiefly in the Judgment that's made of Merit, and in the distribution of Favours. It serves for little to have knowledge and application, and Extraordinary Talents, if you have not also a set of noisy Patrons who carry you on their Shoulders and proclaim your Merit. Whoever excells in this, let him have never so little Merit for the Service either of Church or State, he shall be sure to carry it, in the Dispensation of Favors. A man who's Fortune consists only in good Sense and know-

knowledge, is but an unequal Match for a Rival, who is very Rich, and very much a Blockhead ; tho' indeed they ought never to be put in Competition. The Female Sex, who are naturally led by Interest, are very Subject to this great Error in Taste and Choice. A Lover that's Rich, and gives liberally, let him be otherways good for nothing, shall be prefer'd to a Man of Merit, who cannot support their Extravagant Expence. Sighing and Passion, and Wit and Gallantry, pass for nothing : The Ladies must have something that's more Solid and Real.

But I don't know why we shou'd reproach the Women of this Age as more unreasonable, or more Coquet and Immodest than those of former times : It is an injustice we do them : The least knowledge of the Histories of past Ages, can shew us, that Womankind has been always the same, and made use of their Charms for the same purposes. Seventeen hundred years ago, *Juvenal* reproach'd the Roman Ladies in the same manner, as we do those of the present time ; and for what I can Judge, the Modern Ladies have the Advantage : But the most that can be said, is, that in

in all Ages, we find the same weaknesses, the same Attachements, the same Passions and Biasses, in both Sexes, tho' every Age complains most of it self, and thinks that the Women were never so Libertine, nor that Vice ever appear'd with so much Licentiousnes.

I do not approve of Women's decrying themselves too Airily, and to no purpose, for that's an Error in Taste also. They are obliged to very nice measures, and must never dispence with the Rules of Discretion, if they would have themselves esteem'd, and would preserve their Reputation.

They deceive themselves if they Fancy that the Glory of a Woman consists in the Noise, which her Beauty makes in the World. It consists in the Regularity of her Conduct. A scrupulous Severity becomes a Woman of Merit, who ought never to allow Liberties to be taken before her, but what are very Decent. I do not say, that they ought to abandon all Society, or to consider Men as so many Impostors and Seducers. They may receive with Safety the Praises which the Men give them, and the Homage which they pay to their Merit. The Severity which some Ladies affect,

when their Conduct is not altogether Regular, serves only to make them more despiseable, and people would have more allowance for them, if they would not set up for Vestals.

A Woman ought to build her Reputation only on her Merit and Virtue, and neither on the Caprices nor Applauses of Men. Airs of Pride and Sufficiency diminish, instead of encreasing the Esteem of those who can Judge with Understanding. And affected Virtue robbing them of a part of their Charms; makes them look Sower and Sombre, and always out of Humor.

I begin to perceive, Madam, that my Letter is of an unreasonable length, and that in speaking of the faults of some Women, I am fallen into one with which we use to reproach them, which is, to talk too much. But if my Letter be too long and tiresome, you may read it or not, Madam, or as much as you please of it. I freely excuse you. By an Air of absolute Power you oblig'd me to Write it, and gave me the Plan which I have follow'd. But I do not oblige you to read. You may end where you please.

If it were not already too long, I might say a thousand things more on this Subject ; On the difference of Tasts, and the means to rectify an ill one. You know very well, Madam, that as there are some who have a fine Taste, and Natural, and Just, and Sure ; there are many others who have it Depraved, Bizarre, Extravagant and Ridiculous. Presumption and Opinion of our own Merit beyond all others, strong prejudices and precipitation, all these spoil our Taste, and make us take wrong measures whenever there is occasion of giving our Opinions in doubtfull matters. And when we have once declar'd our selves, we are obstinately harden'd against all that can be said to undeceive us. We do and say a thousand extravagancies, to defend our ill choice ; like those who maintain an opinion in the Schools. We dispute with such violence as if we were afraid to see the Truth. No matter whether the thing be true or false, The point of Honour is, not to yield ; And it is an affront to be convinced by Reasons, how good soever. Such is the strength of a false Shame, a foolish Pride and a ridiculous presumption.

When we dispute of Tastes, and cannot agree, instead of every one maintaining his own with Obstinacy, we ought to take the Method we use for clearing doubts about Words and Language. We ought to have recourse to an Arbitrator, and submit to the Judgment of the most approv'd Authors, as we rely on the best Tasters for the quality of Wine. As for you, Madam, you stand not in need of these Precautions. Your Taste is so just and so well refin'd, that that you are not in danger of Erring from the Rules of right Reason. If we can reproach you for any thing, it is for a too Scrupulous Timidity: for you are always ready to renounce your own Sentiments to subscribe to those of others, and I may say, without Flattery, that so much knowledge and so much docility were never seen together.

Here, Madam, are some of those Reflections that have come into my mind on the Subject you proposed to me. I have taken the liberties you allow'd me, without observing Order or Method. And perhaps I have said some things out of season and remote from my Subject. But still I thought that these loose Transitions, and a Variety, were more suita-

suitable to the nature of a Letter, and to the commands you gave me. In the mean time, Madam, I wish that what I have Written may give you some Satisfaction, and to the two other Illustrious Persons, for whom I have an infinite Respect, and who may always reckon on my Obedience.

I begg Pardon, Madam, if I have said any thing that is not altogether to the Praise and Honor of Women, But I attack none but those whose Taste is depraved ; and I believe you'll easily abandon them to my Censure, since they are not worthy of your Protection, and since I have a most profound Respect for such as have true Merit, and who, like You, Madam, are Models of all sort of Virtue, and an Honor to their Sex. I am with the utmost Veneration,

Madam,

*Your most Humble and
most Obedient Servant.*

L' Abbé de Bellegarde.

The Second
LETTER,

BY A

Lady of the Court of France,
to Monsieur L' Abbe de Belle-
garde:

SIR,

WE are all three extremely satis-
fy'd ; and that you may be
convinc'd of it, I am to tell you, with-
out designing a Pun, that what you
have sent us, on a Good Taste has given
us an Appetite to have some new things
from you, upon other Subjects. In my
own particular, I am so well pleased
with your Correspondence and Complai-
fance, that I venture to put you to a
new proof of it. I'm going for some
Months into the Country, to make Re-
parations and some new Building, at a
Seat

Seat I have three Leagues from *Paris*. I'm afraid of the uneasy dulness of Retirement. I fancy that reading of History may be a good Entrenchment against Chagrin, which Solitude must occasion when one is not us'd to it. And as I consider all, and foresee things at a distance, I believe too that it may be a good remedy against the Mortification of Old Age. We are willing to have a pleasure in conversing with the Dead, when we grow less agreeable than we have been to the Living. It is resolv'd therefore; I will Read History. But one is very awkward and raw that begins any thing. I know nothing of the matter, and yet I would read to the best advantage and not lose my time. Tell me therefore what Authors I should read, and what order is best. I have been told that it is fit to make Remarks in reading of History. Let me know what I ought chiefly to remark, and give me examples of curious Observations, taken from the best Authors, that I may follow such Patterns. Before I Embark, I would have some Rules too, how to know the different Characters

and Genius of Historians, and in what manner a good History ought to be written. I wish I could judge of all this my self, but I have no tincture yet of thole Mysteries; therefore you cannot be too particular, since I know so little. Pray tell me too, if a Lady of the Court may be allow'd, after Five and Twenty, to read Romances. It was once my Prevailing Passion; but it is much cool'd at present. I'm sorry I have lost too much time by it. The reading those ill Books leaves nothing but Chimeras in our Head, and too easily Corrupts our Inclinations, which are too Susceptible of such impressions. Therefore I Renounce Fable for Truth. And tho' I have been told that there are Fables enough to be found in what is called True History, yet it is no matter, I shall examine and distinguish as well as I can, and I'm resolved that History, Ancient and Modern, shall hereafter be one of the chief Amusements of my Life. I flatter my self, that it will be a very agreeable one, and that it will help to make me indifferent about the World, when

a thorow Retreat is necessary. You
see, Sir, I take my measures betimes:
For I shall not be so soon decre-
pit, and I can say as well as *Ma-
dam de la Fayette*, that I count yet by
twenty.

I am,

Sir, &c.

Mon-

Monsieur L'Abbé de Bellegarde's

ANSWER :

TO THE

SECOND LETTER,

Containing Reflections and Rules
for Reading of History.

Madam,

THE desire you have to apply your self to History is very commendable, and worthy of a person of your Sense and Quality. It is a very usefull Amusement, and the labour that's bestow'd on it, is very well rewarded by the new discoveries which are made every day. To reap the Advantages of this study, we ought to pursue it wth Order and Method ; for the essential point is, not the filling our Heads with Strange and Surprising events, but to enter into the Genius of the People, whose History we Read, to know their Manners,

ners, their Character, and the several Springs of their Government and Conduct, and by what Spirit they Acted, to bring about those events which we find in their History. You say, Madam, that you would have also some Notions concerning Romances and the little Histories and Novels which have been so much in Vogue of late, and are so fit to amuse idle persons: I own, Madam, I have not Read enough of those Books to speak of them with any knowledge, which was either because I had not Leisure, or because I have no great Pleasure in Fables. So that from my own Funds, Madam, I can say very little that's reasonable on this matter; But to supply that defect, I shall communicate to you the Reflections of a very Understanding and Ingenious Authour, who has Writ a Dissertation on this Subject, with great Art and Curiosity. And I think it is the best way I can take to obey your Commands, and to be in some measure worthy of the Honour you do me in Consulting me: The desires of a Person of your Merit and Quality are indispensable Laws, which require an implicit Obedience.

Romances have been for a long time the Amusement and Delight of every body, in *France*. The City and the Court ran into this Madness, and even the People, the Commonest of the People, read them with a strange Greediness. But this Fury is cool'd, and we are very much recovered from this Giddiness. The little Novels have come in the place of the Great Romances, whose Prodigious number and bulk, were capable to tire and rebute even those who were most Passionately fond of them. These little Histories are more suitable to the Brisk and Impetuous humor of the French, who can have no great Taste for long-winded works, for they no sooner begin to read a Book, but they desire to be at the end of it. The Prodigious length of the old Romances, the strange Mixture of Extraordinary events, the great number of Actors that were brought upon the Stage, and the Probability of Truth so little regarded; all this and other reasons, have given Persons of good Sense such a disgust of Romances, and have made them fall so Low, as we see them at present.

The Writers of Historical Novels, perceiving this disorder, have avoided these

these Rocks. They take, for the Foundation of their History, only one Principal Event, and do not load it with too many Episodes, which would make it too long. But they fall into another fault which I cannot pardon ; for, that they may please the Reader by Variety, they mix other particular accounts with the Principal History ; which is wrong in my Opinion. For the Curiosity of the Reader is cheated, by this going out of the way ; it retards the Pleasure he would have in being carried directly to the end of the Event ; and he feels in himself a Secret displeasure at the Author, for making him lose sight of the Persons for whom he began to have a concern ; besides that the number of Actors, who have different Interests, breeds Trouble and Confusion to the Memory ; and the Imagination must be put to Pain, to recal the Interests and parts of the principal Persons, whose History has been Interrupted.

The better to fix the Mind of the Reader, choice ought to be made of such Events as are not too Ancient, and of Heroes that are known, and not brought from a distant or Barbarous Country. One is very little concern'd about what

past

past a Thousand years ago amongst the *Tartars* or the *Ethiopians*. The very names of the Heroes ought to have something in them that's agreeable and easy. A harsh and barbarous Name, shocks both the Sight and the Imagination.

Since this sort of Historian paints his Hero after his own Fancy, he ought to give him such Qualities as may most affect the Readers, and make them concern'd in his Fortune. But he ought chiefly to observe the Probability, and to be sure to say nothing that's morally Incredible. There are some real matters of Fact, which have very little of the Appearance of Truth: For example, it is a certain Truth in the Roman History that *Nero* put his Mother to Death; yet it is a very improbable thing that a Son could embrew his hands in the Blood of his own Mother. And it has as little the Air of Truth, that a Captain alone should stop a whole Army at a Bridge; tho' it is not improbable, that a small number of Men should stop a prodigious Army, at such a narrow Pass or Defile; because the Situation of the Ground favours them, and makes things pretty equal.

He that Writes a true History, ought to give an account of things as they truly happened, without troubling his head to soften them, or to make them Credible; for he is not answerable for their Probability, But he who frames a History at his Pleasure, gives his Hero what Character he thinks fit, and brings about the Adventures as seems most proper, without being afraid to be Contradicted by other Historians: Therefore, every thing he says, ought to have an Air of Truth and Credibility. Yet it must be own'd that an Historian shews the Force and Elevation of his own Genius, when he dresses Incredible things in such Colours and Appearances, as may in some measure Force the assent of the Reader.

One of the things of which an Author ought to be most careful, is to preserve the Character of the Persons he introduces. The makers of Romances, give extraordinary Virtues to all their Heroines, free from all weakness, and very unsuitable to their Sex. They ought indeed to be Vertuous, to merit the Esteem and Affection of the Reader, but their Virtue ought to be rightly managed, and not put to every sort of Tryal. It is very Improbable that a young Person whom

whom a Man of merit passionately Loves, and who has a mutual tenderness for him, if she's always alone with him, and in places that favour their Love ; I say ; it has very little of the Air of Probability, that she can still resist his Attacks. These are too delicate occasions ; and an Author breaks all the Rules of decency when he exposes his Heroines in that manner. Yet this is a fault into which our Romance Makers fall in every page. They would dazzle the Eyes of the Reader by something that's wonderful ; but still that wonderful thing, ought to be Credible, that it may make Impression on Persons of Sense and Understanding. The Characters are better managed and preserv'd in the late Novels. They are not fill'd with strange Adventures or wonderful Events. The plainest and simplest Action can fix the mind of the Reader by the Circumstances in which it is dress'd. He enters into all the Passions and all the troubles of the Actor, when once he knows his Character. If his Character be Jealousy, one Look or Smile of the Person he Loves, any motion of her head, or the least Complaisance to his Rival, casts him into violent Agitations, which the Readers also feel by rebound. If he's a

Man

Man of great Virtue, and falls into misfortune, without bringing it upon himself, the Reader Pities him, and shares in his Misfortune. For in Romances, as in Tragedies, Fear and Pity are the two Springs, which move all the other Passions. We put our selves in some Measure, in the place of those we see in danger. The Share we take in their Sufferings, and our Fear of falling into the like Misfortunes Augment our Concern for their Adventures, because such Accidents may happen to any Body; and they touch us the more, because they are the ordinary effects of Nature.

The Heroes of the old Romances have nothing in them that's Natural. Every part of their Character is Excessive. All their Actions and Adventures are full of Wonder and Prodigy. A Prince all alone, attack'd by a great number of Enemies or Robbers, scorns either to avoid or yield to them; does incredible feats of Valour; beats them, pursues them, delivers the Prisoners, and kills an infinity of Persons, to merit the title of a Hero. A Reader, who has Judgment and Understanding, takes no share in these fabulous Adventures, at least he's but very little touch'd with them, because they are not Natural, and he does not believe them.

In the Modern Romances the Characters are not so Extravagant. The Heroes have their Passions, and both their Virtues and Vices, as others of Mankind. By this means every Man sees himself drawn in these Pictures, which ought to be exact, and to have such traits as clearly express the Character of the Heroe, that we may not mistake him, and that we may presently see his predominant Quality which is to be the Spring of all his Motions, and of all the Actions of his Life. 'Tis this which inspires the Reader with a Curiosity, and an Impatience to see the end of his Adventures, which give an Extraordinary pleasure when they are finely handled. The Motions and Agitations of his Mind give yet a greater. But the Author needs a great Penetration, to distinguish them nicely, and not to lose himself in this Labyrinth. The most part of Authors content themselves with Painting Men in general. They represent them Covetous, or Brave, or Ambitious, without entering into the Detail, or Specifying the particular Character of their Avarice, or their Courage or Ambition. They are not sensible of the Nice and Delicate differences which Persons of true skill and knowledge, observe

our Passions. The various Temperament, the Humors and the Conjunctions, alter the very nature and disposition of our Vices. And the turn of our Wit and Understanding, the motions of our Will, our Affections, and Interests, change the nature of our Passions, which are different in every Man alive. The Genius of the Author appears wonderfully when he lays open those differences neatly, and sets before the Eyes of his Reader those things which are almost imperceptible, and escape the observation of the most part of Authors, who have not an exact knowledge of the Plies and Recesses and the various Motions of the heart of Man; and who understand the Passions only by the Bulk, and therefore make but very general Pictures of them.

He that Writes a History, either true or imaginary, ought in the very beginning to mark the Time and the Scene of the Events he is to describe, that the Reader may not be long in doubt. He ought also in very few words, to trace the Portrait, and Character of the Persons who have the most Considerable part in his History, thereby to gain the Affection and Concern of the Reader. It does not much raise the Merit

rit of the Heroe, to praise his Beauty or the treats of his Countenance. Such a low and trifling Detail rebutes a Reader who has a good Taste. It is the Mind, and its Qualities, which recommend the Heroe, and therefore these ought to be describ'd in particular, especially in the Principal Person: For the Actors of the second Rank, who serve only to carry on the Intrigue, ought never to be put in Parallel with the Principal Persons, nor to have Qualities to make them equally esteem'd.

It is not by High and Extravagant Expressions, nor by a Multitude of praises heap'd together, that a Heroe gains the Esteem of the Reader. Their own Actions ought to speak for them. 'Tis by that they shew themselves, and draw their own Pictures. They must have Extraordinary qualities, but not all in the same Degree. They must have some Imperfections, but these must be such as are consistent with their Character. If a Man is Brave or Generous or Liberal, he must not have any the least Fear or Meanness attributed to him, because that would give the lye to the Character and the predominant Virtue of the Heroe. It is true that *Sallust*, who is so happy in his Painting of Mankind, in the Portraict

draws of *Catiline*, represents him both Prodigal and Covetous, at the same time. He threw away profusely what was his own, and invaded what belong'd to others, with an insatiable Avarice. But these two Passions, tho' they seem to be contrary, were inspired by the same Cause, for they were the Effects of the unbounded Ambition of *Catiline*, and the desire which he had to gain a Party to stand by him, and to raise him, on the Ruines of the Common-Wealth. So vast a Project could not be Executed without immense Sums of Money, and *Catiline* stuck at nothing, to have what was necessary to compass his ends.

Every Historian ought to be extreamly Impartial. It is not his business to praise or to blame the Person he writes of. He ought to content himself with exposing matters of Fact, leaving an intire Liberty to the Reader, to Judge as he pleases. He is not the proper Judge of the Merit of his Heroes. He is to draw them Just as they are, and to give a true Picture of their Sentiments, their manners, their Actions, and their Conduct. Yea he goes out of his Character even by giving Epithets to his Actors, either to praise or diminish them. Few

Historians observe this Rule exactly, and yet the least they depart from it, gives just reason to suspect them of Partiality.

Tho' it requires a great Genius to Write a History well, yet the Historian must not always be showing his own Parts and Understanding, nor drain himself by making Nice and Witty reflections perpetually. This is a Fault for which *Tacitus* is blam'd, and even justly. He do's not content himself with relating matters of Fact. He employs the very utmost of refin'd Politicks, to find always some Secret reasons, and the hidden causes of all Events. Yet there is a difference betwixt the part of an Historian and that of the Heroe. Where it is the Heroe that speaks, he ought to express himself naturally and plainly, without refining, or affecting of pointed or studyed Tours of Expression. For still he's supposed to speak without Preparation. But when the Author himself speaks, he may be allow'd to use more Art, and to study, and choose such Terms, as may be fitteſt to make the strongest and the most lasting Imprefſion.

Reflections, and Moral Sentences, and Maxims, are very improper in Novels, the Chief design of which is to please. If there be any Instruction to be had from them, it ought to be rather by the Pictures themselves, than by downright Precepts.

A good Historian observes not the same Method at the End, as at the Beginning of his History. In the beginning he may advance his Maxims and Observations, intermix'd with a little of matter of Fact; but when he draws towards the End, the Curiosity of the Reader encreases, and makes him impatient to see the Result of the whole Scene and Actions. An Historian, who Moralizes at that time, or amuses himself in making of Pictures, rebutes an impatient Reader, that longs for the end of the whole Intrigue. He ought also to use a Stile in the Body of the History, different from that, in which he expresses the Speeches and Conversations, the chief Ornament of which, consists in a lively plainness and Simplicity. The sincere and natural Air, is preferable to Exactness. In the ancient Authors there are frequent examples to be seen of a kind of Conversation which shocks good Sense

Sense and Decency. For it is not natural, that a Man should talk to himself, since the use and end of Speaking, is to Communicate our thoughts to others, besides that it is not easy to be conceived how the Author, who relates such Conversations word by word, should come to the knowledge of them, and to be able to repeat them with so much Exactness. Such Conversations are yet more Impertinent, when they run upon Subjects foreign to the Purpose, and which have not an Absolute Connection with the present History. If these Conversations are long, they tire Infallibly, because they make us lose sight of the Persons, for whom we are concern'd; and interrupt the Thread of the Narration.

No History ought to be left imperfect. There is an absolute necessity of finishing it, for Satisfying the Expectation of the Reader, who being rais'd into a Concern, and Emotion for the Actors, longs impatiently to see the result of the whole matter, and what their Fate is, whether Happy or Unfortunate. 'Tis robbing him of a very sensible Pleasure, to baulk and deprive him of this Just and Necessary Satisfaction. The chief design
of

of History is, Instruction ; and to inspire Men with a Love of Virtue, and a hatred of Vice, by the Examples which it proposes. Therefore the Conclusion of every History, ought to be by some clear Strokes and Reflections of Morality, to lead us to Virtue. Persons of the most refined Virtue, are not always the most Fortunate ; but their Misfortunes create a tender Pity and Compassion in the Readers : And tho' Vice be not always punished in History, yet it is Painted in such Colours, as shew its Deformity, and excite our Indignation.

Here are some Reflections, Madam, which may give you a general Notion of the Method that ought to be observ'd in Writing a History. It is far from a compleat Treatise on this Subject. I bring you only some few Remarks, which may help you to distinguish the good Authors from the Bad who observe neither Rules nor Decency, who confound Characters, or support them very ill, in the course of their History. Our Modern Historians don't trouble their Heads about any of those Maxims, either because they do not know them : or because they have not a Genius fit for their Undertaking. And so, all they

they Write is so dull and Languishing, or so shocking to an Understanding Reader, that it is Impossible, not to be disgusted. They need not pretend to excuse themselves by the barrenness of our History, which is very Rich in it self, and full of great Actions and Events. If we had a Body of History writ with the same Taste and in the same Stile, as the *Memoirs of Monsieur de la Rochefoucault*, are Written, we should find the same Pleasure and Instruction in it, as we do in Reading *Titus Livius*, or *Sallust*, or *Cornelius Tacitus*.

You would have me tell you, Madam, if it is allowable to a Lady of the Court, who is past five and twenty, to read Romances. My Opinion, Madam, is of no great weight. A man who has no Character nor Authority in the World, and who is no Doctor, ought not to meddle in giving Decisions : And therefore what I shall propose to you as my sentiment, I'm far from giving it as a Decision, but only as some little light, in obedience to your commands, and to help to clear your doubt.

I can't imagine that persons of Understanding can have any great Satisfaction in reading of Fables made at
plea-

pleasure, and which have no foundation but in the Fancy and Imagination of the Author. And if we consider seriously of what consequence it is, how we nourish our Mind and Understanding, we may be sensible that it is very dangerous to accustom our selves to Falsehood, as the reading of Romances certainly does. For tho' their Heroes are not always Fabulous, and tho' some of the Actions which are ascrib'd to them, are real matters of Fact; yet these are accompany'd with so many Fabulous circumstances, that it is impossible to distinguish the Truth from the Fiction.

But that which renders the reading of Romances most pernicious, is that the Passion of Love reigns intirely in that sort of Books, and gives very dangerous lessons to young Persons. Love is a Passion too strong of it self, without the assistance of Art to inflame it, and we are oblig'd perpetually to Combate and Resist it. And since Men are already too weak, why do they take pains to increase and flatter their weakness by examples? In Romances every thing is excused in favour of Love. It has a Licence to do any thing. The most foolish and extravagant Passions are Privileg'd, and the most

most unjust Actions excused, if Love Authorizes them.

The soft and passionate expressions, which Romances are full of, make bad impressions on the Inclinations of young people, who flatter themselves that they are capable to inspire as violent Passions as those they find describ'd in Romances, and that they merit the same homage and the like Sacrifices. What I further complain of, is the time that's lost in reading that sort of Books, which are read with so much delight, without knowing when it is enough or how to give over, even tho' we are convinc'd that both the Persons and the Actions are purely imaginary. That Romances are read with so much pleasure, is no argument that they are usefull Books. We ought rather to conclude that the number of Fools and Idle people in the World is much greater than that of Wise and Reasonable persons.

If some Romances have any thing in them to merit our Esteem, it is because they shew the Motions and Sentiments of the Minds of Mankind with great delicacy. They are pictures that set before our Eyes what is most hid and mysterious in the Thoughts and Inclinations
of

of Men. Sometimes too, in these Books we find very fine sentiments of Morality, and Maxims of a high Virtue, supported by great examples, which always make some impression on the Mind of the Reader.

In short, since the Mind of Man cannot be always ty'd to serious Occupation, I believe that persons of good Principles, may in some measure be permitted to read those Fables, provided it be only to Divert and Amuse them, or to reap what advantage may be drawn from them, and not with that idle fondness which may make them neglect a more profitable employing of their time and application. Those who judge right can draw the same advantage from Romances as from Tragedies ; For, tho' both the Persons and the Actions are pure Invention, in the one as well as the other, we are excited to Virtue, not so much by the Authority of the Persons who practise it, as by the Beauty and Excellence of Virtue it self, when it is drawn to the life. The Heroes in Romances have always their best side shown. Their Faults are never discover'd. And the Author, not being confined to Truth, as in History, illustrates and sets off their Virtues

tues with the most favourable Colours and Circumstances he can imagine.

Those extraordinary Men, who are proposed as Models of Virtue, ought to have their own humane weaknesses, as other Men, but still their Virtue must be stronger than their Passions.

Ambition and Love are the principles of all the great Actions of the Heroes of Romances : And in effect, these two Passions are the springs of the most part of the Events of the life of Man, They are noble Passions, which excite great Thoughts in Mankind, and animate them to do the most Heroick Actions.

All things consider'd, the reading of Romances is perhaps not so dangerous as many imagine, But still it ought to be with precaution, and as a kind of amusement ; being still on our guard against their corrupting our Minds or hindering our more essential occupations.

Here's the summ of what I can say, Madam, as to the reading of Romances. But to decide justly, whether that sort of Books ought to be forbidden or allow'd, the Temperament and Inclinations of the person in particular are to be consider'd. The Case is much the same as in the Matter of Comedies and Opera's

Opera's. Many see them innocently and without any danger to their Virtue: But this is far from being a general rule; for it is certain that they make very ill impressions on the minds of many others, who go out of the Play-house with their Imagination corrupted, and possess'd and infected with what they have seen and heard. Their thoughts are employ'd about that only, nor can any Virtuous sentiment have place for some time after.

But You, Madam, who are naturally Serious, and always upon your guard; You who know and apply your self to what is fit for you; Who enter into the detail of all your Affairs and your Duty, and never in the least depart from the rules of an exact Decency; My opinion is, Madam, that sometimes to unbend your Mind from your Constant and Thoughtfull application, and to amuse and divert you, You may read some of the better sort of Romances, in which the common faults and indecencies are carefully avoided; For example, those who are ascrib'd to Monsieur *De la Roche Foucault*, and to Madam *De la Fayette*: As you may sometimes also go to Plays, when the Pieces that are

Acted

Acted are Clean and Modest, as are the most part of those that are Writ by the Famous Monsieur *Corneille*.

Madam, it is a piece of knowledge, very worthy of your Curiosity, to learn in what time the several Monarchies began, and how long it is since Men thought fit to have Masters.

From *Adam* to the Deluge, that is, for sixteen Hundred years, Mankind liv'd in a perfect Liberty and Independency. Every Family was like a little State, of which the Father was the Head, and he had no Superior. These first Men, altogether rude and untaught, Liv'd without Ambition. Their desires exceeded not the limits of their own Possessions; and all their Riches consisted in their Flocks, which serv'd both to Nourish and to Cloath them. But it is an Error to think that they Liv'd in great Innocence. They were so wicked and corrupted; Guilty of so black and abominable Crimes, that God was obliged to Exterminate them, by a general Deluge. After that, the Sons of *Noah*, whom God had preserv'd with their Wives to re-people the Earth, shared it amongst them, and were the first Heads

of

of those different People who spread themselves over the Globe.

It was then that Mankind lost their Liberty. *Nimrod*, a turbulent Man and Enemy of quiet, invaded and usurp'd the Possessions of his Neighbours; subjected them to his Domination, and established a kind of Empire at *Babylon*. So, it was not by Choice that Men submitted to have Masters. It was Force, and the Violence of the first Conquerors, that brought them under the Yoke. The ill example of *Nimrod* encouraged others, who made themselves Kings at the expence of the publick Liberty. The Arms which Men had at first invented to defend themselves against the wild Beasts, were turn'd against Mankind, and serv'd to Enslave them.

Ninus the Son of *Belus* founded the first Empire of the *Affyrians*, the seat of which was at *Niniveh*, an Ancient Town and already Famous. Some Authors have thought that this Empire of the first *Affyrians*, lasted Thirteen hundred years. At last it fell by the Corruption and softness of *Sardanapalus* who lung'd himself into all manner of Voultuousness. The *Medes* were the first that revolted against him. All his

other Subjects despised him, after their Example; and he was reduc'd to so great Extremity that he was forc'd to burn himself alive, with his Wives who were Partners of his Corrupt Pleasures.

Three Kingdoms were form'd out of the *Ruines* of this Empire. The Empire of the *Medes* was very Flourishing. The second *Affyrian* Empire was considerable, and *Niniveh* again the Capital. The Kingdom of *Babylon* is very Famous in the Sacred History, because God Almighty made use of the Arms of these Idolatrous Kings to Punish the Crimes of his own People. *Achaz* the King of *Juda*, being press'd by his Enemies, implor'd the Assistance of the King of *Affyria*, or *Niniveh*, and by the means he taught the *Affyrians* the way into *Judea*, which they Ravag'd sever times, and at last made an intire Conquest of it. They Pillaged the Famous Temple of *Solomon*, where they found immense Riches, and a prodigious Quantity of the Sacred Vessels, of Gold and Silver. They carried the Jews Captiv into *Niniveh* and *Babylon*. *Salmanazar* utterly over-turn'd the Kingdom of *Isra*

Romulus and *Remus* who were descended of the Kings of *Alba*, founded the C

of *Rome*, the famous Capital of the *Roman Empire*; about 753 years before the Birth of *Jesus Christ*.

Cyrus, the Son of *Cambyses*, reunited the two Kingdoms, of the *Medes* and *Persians*; after several great Victories he became Master of all the East, and founded the greatest Empire that ever had been in the World. By this united Force, he overcame the Kings of *Babylon*; and being Master of so vast an Empire, he permitted the *Jews*, who had been very long in Captivity, to return into *Judea*, under the Conduct of *Zorobabel*, and to rebuild the Temple of *Jerusalem*.

The Family of *Cyrus* was extinct in a little time. *Darius* the Son of *Hystaspes*, who some think to be *Affuerus*, was raised to the Empire. It was in his time that *Rome* and *Athens* form'd themselves into Republicks, having expell'd the Tyrants. The death of *Lucretia*, who was violated by *Sextus* the Son of *Tarquin*, inspir'd the *Romans* with the design both of Revenge and Liberty, the Kings were banished for ever, and *Rome* having made it self free was Govern'd by *Consuls*.

Athens was very near crush'd, in the beginning of its Liberty, by the Power

of the *Perſians*. *Darius* ſent a formi-
dable Army againſt them; but it was
deſtroy'd in the Plains of *Marathon* by
Miltiades, tho' he had but Ten Thou-
ſand Men. His Son, *Xerxes*, made great
efforts to Revenge the affront; but he
had no better Success than his Father.
His Army, composed of Eleven Hun-
dred Thousand men, was ſtopt at the
pass of the *Thermopyles* by three hun-
dred *Lacedæmonians* commanded by *Leoni-*
das King of *Sparta*: And his Navy was
beaten near *Salamis*. *Xerxes* himſelf was
kill'd that same year by *Artabanes*, Cap-
tain of his Guards.

About this time the *Macedonians*, who
were destin'd to overturn the Empire
of the *Perſians*, began to Signalize them-
ſelves under *Philip* the Father of *Alexander* the Great. He made himſelf
Master of all *Greece* by the Famous
Battle of *Cheronnee* againſt the *Athenians*
and their Allies. *Alexander* who was
then but Eighteen, did Prodigies of
Valour in that Battle. After ſo great
Success, *Philip* form'd the design of
bringing down the Power of the *Perſians*, and got himſelf chosen Captain
General of all the Troops of *Greece*. But
he was Aſſassinat'd in the midſt of a

Feast,

Feast, by *Pausanias*. *Alexander*, who had no less Courage and Ambition than his Father, headed the *Macedonians* and the other *Grecians* who follow'd his Fortune; attack'd *Darius* King of *Persia*; beat him in three pitch'd Battles: And having carryed his Victorious Arms into the *Indies*, he dyed at *Babylon*, in the flower of his Age, and the mid'st of his Triumphs.

This is a short View, Madam, how these Empires succeeded one to another, and what were the Monarchies which made themselves most Famous, beginning a little after the Deluge; for during the Sixteen hundred years before t, Mankind lived without Kings. The *Affyrians*, the *Medes*, the *Persians*, the *Grecians*, and the *Romans*, were Formidable in heir turns, by the greatness of their Pow'r, and the number of their Victories. After the Ambition of some Men, had inspir'd them with the design of Exalting themselves, and Enslaving others, the poor People were always the Sacrifice of the stronger, who were contending for the Empire of the World, and who cemented their Authority with the Blood of the Unfortunate.

After the death of *Alexander*, no Man was found capable to succeed him, or

to re-unite so great a Power under one Head. His vast Empire was divided into several Kingdoms. His own Captains shar'd the Spoil, and Massacred his nearest Relations, his Brother, his Mother, his Wives, his Children, his Sisters ; to maintain themselves with Security in their Usurpation.

The *Romans* having subdu'd all *Italy*, began to think of extending their Conquests, and form'd the design of bringing down the Power of *Carthage*, which was Formidable to them, *Regulus* reduced it to great Extremities ; but he was Beaten and taken by *Xantippus*, the *Macedonian*, whom they had call'd to their Affistance, and made General of their Army. Yet *Carthage* was obliged to submit and pay Tribute to the *Romans*. *Hannibal*, the Son of *Amilcar*, left nothing unattempted to repair the losses of his Country, and to restore the Ascendant it once had over the *Romans*. He was but Five and Twenty years when they gave him the Command of their Army, after the death of *Asdrubal*. He left *Spain*, of which he was Governour, and came into *Italy* like a Torrent. Four great Battels, which he gain'd, were not able to bring down the Power of *Rome*.

*It's
losses*

losses were very great, but its Generals defended it against all the Force and Courage and Skill, and good Fortune of *Hannibal*. The young *Scipio*, at the Age of Twenty four, to divide the Forces of the *Carthaginians*, carried the War into *Spain*, where his Father and his Uncle had lately Perished. In a little time, he chas'd them out of *Spain*, and pursued them into *Africk*, so that *Carthage* was forc'd to recal *Hannibal* from *Italy*, as their last and only Recourse. But he could not save his Country. The old Warriour was Vanquished by the young Conquerour. After he Fled, he Endeavour'd to animate and Arm all the Eastern world against the *Romans*, but they defeated all who durst declare for *Hannibal*, who at last in Despair Poyson'd himself, that he might not fall into the hands of his Enemies, who demanded to have him given up to them by *Prusias* King of *Bithinia*.

After *Carthage* was subdued and Demolished, the *Romans* found no other Power capable to resist them. Many Kingdoms became Roman Provinces. *Emilius Paulus* took *Macedonia*, which Kingdom had lasted seven Hundred years. *Attalus* King of *Pergamos*, by

his last Will, gave that Kingdom to the *Romans*. The Empire grew and Flou-
rished abroad: But the Divisions within
brought it several times to the brink of
Ruin. The *Gracchi*, who were Tribunes
of the People, whom they brib'd, by vast
Donations, did all they could to destroy
the Republick, but they perish'd in their
design. *Marius* and *Sylla* attempted in
the same manner as the *Gracchi* to enslave
their Country, and to satisfy their Am-
bition, they made streams of the Blood
of their Fellow Citizens to run in the
Streets. *Sylla* got the better of *Marius*,
and Tyranniz'd over his Country. But
at last he voluntarily renounc'd his Dicta-
torship, which he had Usurp'd by Force,
and reduc'd himself to the Rank of a
Common Citizen: But his Abdication
did not put an end to the Troubles. *Ser-
torius* in *Spain*, and *Catiline* in *Italy*, took
Arms against *Rome*, with a design to
Enslave it. The great *Pompey* beat *Ser-
torius*; and the Eloquence of the Consul
Cicero, rather than his Courage, ruin'd
Catiline's Party in *Italy*. The Ambition
and Jealousy of *Pompey* and *Cæsar*, re-
new'd the Factions. The one had sub-
dued and united all the East, and the
other the *Gauls*, to the *Roman* Empire.

The

The two Rivals could not endure one another. They fought for the Empire of the World in the Battle of *Pharsalia*. That was the last day of the *Roman Liberty*, which was there Extinguished without Recovery. The whole Empire was forc'd to bow, under the Power of *Cæsar*. Yet they Massacred him in the very Senate, to deliver themselves from his Tyranny. But his Death plung'd them into an endless Ocean of Slavery, and Misfortunes. *Mark Antony*, *Lepidus*, and *Octavius Cæsar*, who was afterward call'd *Augustus*, shar'd the Authority amongst them for some time, but their Ambition and Divisions fill'd both *Rome* and the Empire with Blood and Confusion.

Augustus master'd his Rivals, and got the whole Power into his hands. After many Victories, he restor'd Calm and Quiet in the Universe, and shut the Temple of *Janus*. It was in the Reign of this peaceable Prince, that our Saviour *Jesus Christ* came into the World, to reconcile Heaven and Earth. This was about 4000 years after the Creation.

Augustus adopted *Tiberius* for his Successor in the Empire, which became Hereditary to the Family of the *Cæsars* who Enjoy'd it with great Glory, more than

than a hundred and Fifty years, till the weakness of the last Emperours suffer'd it to be over-run by the Barbarians. The *Goths*, formerly call'd the *Getæ*, invaded *Europe*, and the East was laid waste by the *Asiatick Scythes* and the *Persians*. Thirty Tyrants rose in the Empire ; dismember'd it, and made horrible Desolations. The *Franks* and *Germans* stuck at nothing, to make themselves Masters of *Gaul*. The multitude of Barbarians who attack'd the Empire, was the reason why *Dioclesian* Associated *Maximian* for his Collegue. And these two Princes adopted also *Constantius Chlorus* and *Galerius*. *Dioclesian*, weary of the trouble and ill Success he had, in Persecuting the Christians, whose number Encreased, the more they were Persecuted, renounc'd the Empire, either Voluntarily, or being forced to it, by his Son in Law, *Galerius*. *Maximian* follow'd the Example of *Dioclesian*, who had adopted him. But very soon after, he repented of it. Each of them, before he renounced, created a *Cæsar* to Succeed him ; but this great number of Emperours and *Cæsars* was a great expence to the Empire, and the Cause of many Divisions. *Constantius Chlorus*, for his share, had *Spain* and *Gaul* and *Great Britain*.

Britain. His Son, whom God had destin'd to put an end to the Persecutions of the Christians, after he had delivered the Empire from the Tyrants who tore it to Pieces, openly professed himself Christian. Whether he was displeas'd with *Rome*, or if he suspected the Senate, he retired to *Byzantium*, which he caus'd to be rebuilt, and call'd it *Conflantinople*.

When he was a dying, he divided the Empire amongst his three Sons, who made War for the limits of their several shares. These Wars, which continu'd under their Successors, were very fatal to the happiness and quiet of the Empire, and gave occasion to the Barbarians to invade it on all sides. The *Goths* ravaged *Italy*. The *Vandals* possess'd a part of *Gaul* and of *Spain*, and wherever they pass'd, they left bloody marks of their Barbarity. *Alaric*, who was an *Arian*, took and Sack'd *Rome*. He Married *Placidia*, Sister to the Emperour *Honorius*, and the sweetness of her humour extremely softned the rudeness and ferocity of her Husband. The *Franks*, who had often been Repulsed, made new Attempts upon *Gaul*, and at last they succeeded, under the conduct of *Pharamond* the Son of *Marcomir*. It was about 420

Years

Years after *Christ* that the Monarchy of *France* began to be establish'd, on the ruins of the Roman Empire ; which by that time was reduced to great extremities.

You may see, Madam, in the *French* Historians, the Rise, and the Progress, and the Greatness of this Illustrious Monarchy, which is the first and most famous of all that are in the World. But since your design is, Madam, to have a full knowledge of History, I should not advise You to begin this study by the reading of any particular Modern Histories. I believe it is more proper to begin much higher, with the *Greek* History, and I have heard you say, that the Heroes of that Country are more to your Taste than any of all the others, and that according to the Example of a very illustrious Lady, you have a wonderfull Affection for *Alexander* the Great; Read therefore *Herodotus*, *Thucydides*, and *Xenophon*. The precaution you have taken to learn the Latin, will be usefull to you in reading of those Histories which are not yet rendered into *French*, or which are but ill translated ; tho' indeed the most part are pretty well : And we may say of our Nation without flattery that a *French* Man may acquire any

any sort of knowledge and erudition without the help of Foreign Languages.

You have read *Plutarch* already, but if you please, Madam, do it again; and take another view of his Illustrious Heroes: Yet do not read them in a continued thread one after another, but take them according to their Time, and as they come in to be mention'd in the general body of History.

What will most Embarrass you, Madam, in the reading of History, is the little skill you have yet acquired of Geography and Chronology; two things extremely necessary for an exact knowledge of History, and for having clear and distinct Notions of times and places where events happened.

It is fit to tell you, Madam, that for Order's sake, you are to Read *Herodotus* before *Thucydides*, and him before *Xenophon*. The affairs of *Alexander*, for whom you have such a concern, have so great a Connection with those of *Greece*, that no doubt you'll read *Quintus Curtius*, tho' it is doubted whether it is a real History, or a Romance made at pleasure.

Tho' you have more Taste for the Greeks than the Romans, yet I don't doubt,

doubt, Madam, you'll find the Roman History finer: It is better Writ, with greater order and exactness and nicety. If you begin with *Justin*, he'll give you a View of Universal History. *Putarch* will be as useful to you for the *Roman* as for the *Greek* History, and you may read him in the same method, taking the particular Lives as they fall in with the general History. You'll have an Infinite pleasure in reading *Titus Livius*, who in my opinion, is the best, the most Judicious, and the most Agreeable, of all the Historians that ever Wrote. His style has an inimitable Grace and Sweetness: His reasonings are solid: His Pictures Lively and Just: His Views and his Knowledge are strong and great; and his Understanding has no Limits: for he speaks of every thing with the same Facility, and the same agreeableness. In short, in every part of his History he shews the great Beauty of his Genius. The second Decad of that excellent Work is lost, and it is a loss which cannot be enough regreted. The Epitome of it that remains, supplies it but very imperfectly. Yet it is to be Read, as also the five Books of *Polybius*.

Read

Read *Sallust*, Madam ; he's a beautiful, excellent Historian ; tho' he Writes but pieces of History, he does it with great Art and Delicacy. His *Conspiracy of Catiline*, and the Pictures that are to be seen there, are Masterpieces, in my opinion. You'll have a great pleasure in reading *Cæsar's* Commentaries, which are Written with so true justness of Understanding, and the Natural easy stile of a Gentleman. You have Read many of *Cicero's* letters. Read them again with relation to History. They'll shew you the hidden causes of many curious events, and many things in detail which are not to be found any where else. That great man opens his heart to his Friend *Atticus*, on the head of the Civil War, and draws the Pictures of the most considerable persons who were concern'd in it ; shews their secret Springs, and the particular interests they follow'd, without troubling their heads about the Calamities which a Civil War was to bring on their Country, which was to be torn in pieces.

After reading of *Florus*, who carries his History to the beginning of *Augustus*, you may read in *Suetonius* the Lives of the twelve *Cæsars*. But of all the Roman Historians,

Historians, he who delighted me most, was *Velleius Paterculus*. He's Inimitable in Painting Mankind. His Book is but an Abridgement of History from the first times of the World till the 16th Year of *Tiberius*. But it must be own'd, that those short strokes and Glances are preferable to any long winded work.

I need not recommend to you, Madam, the *Annals of Tacitus*. It is a long time since you read and esteem'd that Historian. *Dion* begins with the latter times of the Republick, and carries it on for two ages. *Herodian* resumes a part of *Dion*'s. He describes the causes of the decadence of the *Roman Empire*, and the ruin of the Republick.

These are the Authors, Madam, which are to be Read with the most Attention. There are many other Historians whom you will not pass by, without doing them the Honor to Read them. I recommend to you chiefly the *Antiquities of Josephus*, and the *War against the Jews*.

You will not have the same Taste nor Pleasure in our own Historians as in the Greek and the Roman. In the mean time, Madam, you must Read the History of France, for it would look very oddly to know

know what past at *Rome* and *Athens*, and to be Ignorant of the great things have happen'd in the Neighbourhood of *Paris*. You may read *Mezeray*, for one of the first, notwithstanding all his faults, and the disgust he'll give you. But it is enough you Read the Abrigdment.

As'to the Historical Remarks which may be made in Reading of Authors, and whereof you desire of me some examples ; why truly Madam, every one makes these according to his own Fancy. Some who Love Chronology, content themselves to mark the dates of what happens. Others are more pleas'd with the Morality and what concerns our Manners. Others retain nothing but the surprising Actions, gaining of Battles, Captivity of Kings, and Ruining of Empires. For my self, I love to know the Genius, the Taste, and the Manners of Nations, their Laws, their Customs, their Politicks, and their Religion.

It being impossible to retain all that one Reads, it will be fit, Madam, to mark in your Journal or Collection, the most Remarkable and principal Actions, and the time they happened. And

since you will absolutely have me to give you some examples, I shall briefly glance at some Passages out of Modern and Ancient History, without observing any kind of Order either of time or place, but writing them down, just as they come into my Memory. Perhaps this very Confusion and Disorder will make the Citations more agreeable.

I own, Madam, I'm extremely touch'd with the Flegm and Fortitude which *Philip the II.* show'd when they brought him the News that his Fleet, which had cost so many Millions, and was call'd *Invincible*, had Perish'd on the Coasts of Britain; He was in his Closet writing a Letter. He heard the account in very cold Blood, and without showing the least Emotion; and he said to the Person that brought the News, *That he had not sent his Fleet to Fight against the Winds:* And so he continued to write and ended his Letter. Here is, without doubt, an instance of a wonderful Moderation; and one must be very much Master of himself and of the Motions of his Mind, to show no Impatience or Emotion, upon so Extraordinary an Occasion.

In the Greek History, Madam, you may see a very fine Answer which *Age-silas* made to one of his Friends, to whom he had promised a Favour. But this great Man having perceived afterwards, that what was ask'd of him was against Equity he told his Friend who was pressing him to keep his word, *If what you ask be just, I have promised it; but if it is not, I am not bound to grant it.* Tho' the word of a Prince ought to be Inviolable, yet they are not obliged to keep it if they have happened to Promise what is unjust or unreasonable, or if there was Artifice us'd to surprize them into it.

The Emperor *Augustus* one day gave a great Proof of his Humanity and Goodness. A Soldier who had serv'd him very well in the War against *Anthony*, pray'd the Emperor to defend him against his Enemies who Endeavour'd to Ruine him by an unjust Process they had rais'd against him. The Emperor gave him one of his Courtiers, to go with him in his name, and Recommend him to the Judges: The Soldier was not pleas'd with this Proceeding, and told the Emperor, with a Roman Liberty, Sir, said he, *I did not so by you, when you was in danger in the Battle of Actium; I Fought*

for you in Person, till you know I was all over cover'd with Wounds. This way of reproaching him, was so far from offending the Emperor, that it gave him a greater kindness for the Souldier, and he went himself to the Bar and Defended him. There was something very great in this of *Augustus*, and I'm sure, Madam, such an Action will be very much to your Taste.

You'll very much approve too an answer which *Cato* gave to the Great Pompey, who ask'd his Daughter in Marriage. The Brave and High-minded Roman told him, *He would never give him Hostages against the Common-Wealth*. Pompey began to be suspected of designs against the Publick Liberty, and therefore *Cato* would make no Alliance with him, tho' it was Honorable both to himself and his Family.

I know not, Madam, if the *Greeks* and the *Romans* had really more Merit and Greatnes of Mind and Virtue, than we have; but it is most certain, that in many things, which they did and said there appears an Extraordinary greatness of Soul. For example, what *Percles* did to a Man who had insulted him at the Bar, and pursued him Home to his

his Lodging with all the injurious Reproaches Imaginable. *Pericles* heard him Patiently, without Answering a word : and Night coming on, he sent one of his Servants with a Flambeau to light him back to his Lodging. This was to Revenge himself highly of the other's Impertinences, who ought to have Dy'd for Shame, to see himself us'd with so Surprizing a Civility by *Pericles*.

The great Firmness and Resolution of that *Prince of Condé*, who was Protector of the Huguenots, on a very mortifying occasion, was worthy of the Soul of a *Roman*. Just as he was going to give Battle to the Kings Army, a Principal Officer of his Party, mounted on an unruly Horse, came up to give the Prince an account of some Commission he had given him ; the Horse struck out and broke the Prince's Leg. It was propos'd immediately to carry him off : No, No, said he, without any concern, *We have no need of Legs for Fighting; our Arms are sufficient* This answer shews a very Heroical Soul, and a Courage and Firmness that was immoveable.

After such examples, Madam, I have a great mind to retract what I had advanc'd, that the *Greeks* and the *Romans* had more Greatness of Soul than the Mo-

derns. I shall give you another example of Heroism, which tho' it has no relation to the War, yet deserves to be extreamly esteem'd. One of those Illustrious Moderns of whom I speak, had invited a Person of great distinction one Night to Supper. When Supper was done they went to Play, and the Stranger would needs Play very deep. He that gave the Supper, and who had Won a great Game, threw down his Cards as if he had Lost. When the Company was gone, one of the Gentlemen said to him, that he had not taken heed to his Game, and that he had won. *I knew it very well, said he, but I would not make him pay for his Supper.* This disinterestedness Shows a Spirit that's very Noble, and very generous Sentiments.

In all times, Merit has been Envy'd. The greatest Men, and who have done the greatest Services to their Country, have not been always very well Reward-ed. After so many Illustrious Actions which *Aristides* had done for the honor of Greece, it was propos'd in a Publick Assembly, to banish him; for in *Greece* and in *Rome*, the body of the People Voted in the most important Affairs. *Aristides* was present in this Assembly, and stood next

to one who resolv'd to Condemn him, but who could not write his Name, and therefore Address'd himself to Aristides, not knowing him, and made him this Compliment, *Pray, Sir, write me the name of Aristides, that I may put in my Vote with them who Condemn him.* It seems you know him then said Aristides, or he has done you some great Injury. No, says the Citizen, but I hear the Common Cry, every where, is to Banish him, and I follow the Voice of the People. Aristides, without the least Emotion, and without letting the Man know who he was, wrote his Name, and gave it him, to put amongst the Votes which proscrib'd him. I confess, Madam, this proceeding seems very Extraordinary, and I cannot hinder my self to Admire so great a Tranquility.

I admire no less what Alexander did, when one wrote to him that his Physician design'd to Poyson him with a Potion. The Accusation made no Impression on the Mind of that great Prince. He gave his Physician the Letter to Read, and the mean time he Drank up the Potion. The good effect which it had, Justify'd the Physician's Integrity, and the great generosity of the King.

The Temper shewn by the Duke of Guise upon a like occasion, much resembled this of *Alexander*. During the Troubles of Naples, where Monsieur de Guise Commanded, there was a design to Poyson him, and one was feiz'd with Poyson about him: He confess'd his Crime, and nam'd an Officer who had employ'd him. The People were running immediately to pull the Officer in Pieces. But the Prince, to Calm the Fury of the People, went to the Officer's quarter, call'd for Bread and Wine, and Sweet-meats; Eat and Drank heartily before all the World, to convince them that the Officer was unjustly Accus'd, and that he did not suspect him.

Women are capable, as well as Men of the most Heroick Sentiments and Actions. *Julius Sabinus*, being taken Prisoner at the head of those who revolted against *Vespasian*, was put into Prison, and Condemn'd to lose his head. He made his Escape, and hid himself in a Cave. *Eponina*, his Wife, being inform'd where he was, she came immediately and shut her self up with him in the Cave, where they continued nine Years, and she bore him several Children; At last they were Discoyered and

ta.

taken, and carried to *Rome*. She was inconsolable for her Husband ; and came and threw herself at the Emperor's Feet, with the Children she had born in the Cave : *Here is, Sir, said she, What I have brought up, and Nursed my self, that I might bring so many more to Beg you to have Pity on our Misfortunes.* Her affection, and her Grief, and Generosity were wonderful ; But *Vespasian* was inexorable.

The Virtues of Women are more Gentle, and have much less of Roughness than those of Men. They have still something of the Delicacy of their Sex. The *Romans*, in my Opinion, shew'd more Partiality than Judgment, in the excessive praises they bestow'd on *Porcia* the Daughter of *Cato* and Wife of *Brutus*; who hearing of her Husbands Misfortune in Battle, went and swallow'd burning Coals to kill herself. This is Madness and Despair and Ferocity, rather than true Courage or Virtue. Yet the *Romans* have mightily extoll'd her, some even above her Father. Women are subject to be overcome sometimes by the Violence of a Passion. The Countess *Mary*, Niece of *Philip August*, hearing that her Husband *Baldwin*, had

Con-

Conquer'd the Empire of *Constantinople*, was so Transported with Joy, that she Dyed upon the Spot.

A Court is the place where one has most need to be Master of his Passions and Resentment, because it is not Merit always that is considered in the distribution of Favours or Employments. One must frequently in Prudence, dissemble his Chagrin; for he may Ruin his Fortune by an unseasonable Resentment. A Man of a very ordinary Merit was preferr'd to one of the greatest Captains of *Greece*, to Command the Army. He shew'd no trouble at the Affront. He went to the Army, and serv'd as a single Soldier under his Competitor, who having neither skill nor Experience, nor Courage, Engaged the Army without any Judgment. All was in disorder and the utmost danger, by the Imprudence of the General. In this extremity they had Recourse to the known Valour and Skill of the other. He sav'd both the Army and the General, without showing the least Chagrin for the Injustice had been done him.

Women are naturally a little inclin'd to Covetousness, which is a great Blemish to a Person of Birth or Quality. The Empress, Wife of *Theophilus*, not content to possess all the Riches of the Eastern Empire, sent every where to buy the Richest goods, to sell them again at *Constantinople*, and gain by them. The Emperor one day seeing a Rich Ship enter the Harbour, and hearing that it belong'd to his Wife, sent immediately and Burnt it, with all the Goods that were in it. The Empress was highly displeas'd, and her trouble was increas'd by the Reprimand given her by her Husband. He told her that *God had made him an Emperor, but that it seem'd she design'd to make him a Merchant.*

I have told you already, Madam, that every Reader of History, makes Remarks according to his own Fancy, and fills his Collection and Journal, with what he likes best. You may do the same, Madam, and so I think it is not Necessary that I cite you any more Examples. I shall make no Excuse for the Length of my Letter. The Quiet of your Country
Retire-

Retirement will give you leasure e-
nough to Read it, tho' it were lon-
ger. But I shall add nothing to it;
only beg leave to assure you that
whilst I Live, Madam, I shall be,
with great Respect and Submission.

*Your most Humble and
most Obedient Servant.*

L' Abbé de Bellegarde.

The

The Third

LETTER

BY A

Lady of the Court of *France*,
 to Monsieur *L' Abbé de Belle-garde.*

SIR,

I Have a Thousand things to ask you, and for fear of forgetting any one of them, I shall propose them to you in a thread, together ; but without Order or Connection ; and you are to Answer in the same manner. If my Questions discover my Ignorance, yet at the same time they'll convince you that I have a great desire to be instructed. And I assure you, before hand, that you shall find me very docile, and to have a great regard to your Decisions. Pray tell me then, whether the Ancients who are so much talk'd

talk'd of, had more Wit and Reason than We? Were their works more polish'd and perfect, and in short, Better than Ours? Have the great Names of *Homer* and *Virgil* a Just Title to so much **Admiration**, and do their Poems truly deserve to be so highly Valued. I own to you to my shame, that I have been very weary of the *Divine Plato*, and that in his *Dialogues*, tho' translated, and with very learned Remarks, by an ingenious Man whom I esteem, I Fancy I find a Thousand Childish things ; Mean, and out of Season, and Trifling, and which come not to the Point. I believe this may be an effect of my want of true Taste, for my Reason tells me that it is impossible that so many Great Men, of this and former Ages shoud admire *Plato*, without just ground, and finding in him what Merits their Admiration. In the next place say something to me on the Manners of the Ancients ; if they were more Virtuous, or more Vicious than We? If the World is chang'd from White to Black, as we are generally told ? or rather, if Men are not always the same and go on in the same way, and in the same Manner ? And pray tell me, Particularly, if they Liv'd longer than We ?

We? For I own sincerely, I can't bring my Credulity to Imagine that *Methusalem*, and his Contemporaries, lived Eight or Nine hundred years; nor shall I ever believe it, unless it were an Article of Faith. In that Case, I submit. But now I have an Inclination to believe that the years which *Moses* speaks of, are not of twelve Months, or such as ours are; otherways I should be very Sorry I did not Live in that time, to have counted my Life by Centuries. Can you tell me pray Sir, if the Women of those days were Handsomer, or more Coquet, or more Virtuous than we are? If the wonders which are told of the Beautiful *Helen*, or the Famous *Queen of Egypt*, are true? Do you believe that there are *Fairies*, or that there ever were any. I have heard it so often, and was so early Rock'd into it, that I cannot get it out of my Head. What difference is there between the *Fairies* and the *Sibylls*? Are not these last a kind of *Fairies*, or some sort of *Magicians*? I told you from the beginning that I had a abundance of Questions to propose to you. We must amuse our selves as we can, when we are in the Country. I have had a dispute lately with an *Abbé*,

a Friend of yours, upon the head of *Giant*s. Pray consider how far I go, to find Subjects for dispute. For my part, I can't force my self to think that there have been whole Nations of *Giant*s; tho' I doubt not there have been some *Giant*s, in some places, as we see Monsters Daily, and Children with two Heads or four Arms. Pray tell me your Opinion. I think these are all the Doubts I had to propose to you. Instruct me the best you can. I'll expect your answer by the first post. Make it long or short, as you please. Our Company is lately encreas'd. Two learned Ladies are come to see us; and I shew'd them your Letters: They're quite Astonish'd to see me run head-long into this way of Learning and the *Bel-Esprit*. I am to stay a Fortnight yet in the Country; after which I return to *Paris*. I hope you'll be there too by that time, where I'll be very glad to see you, and to consult you freely on all my Doubts.

I am Sir,

Tours, &c.

Mon.

Monsieur L'Abbe de Bellegarde's

ANSWER TO THE THIRD LETTER,

*The Difference of the Moderns and
the Ancients, &c.*

Madam,

IT is old Error, which every age has fall'n into, to think that the people of former times were more Virtuous, had more Wit and Tast and Understanding, than those of their own Age, and that the Works of the Ancients were infinitely better than those of their own Contemporaries. They who decide in this manner, do it without knowledge of the Cause, and without a sufficient examination of particulars : Or it is an Affectation, created by a hidden jealousie against some of the Moderns.

H

We

We must do this justice to the Ancients, that their Works have contributed infinitely to form the Taste of those who have come after them; and that the Ages have been Rude or Polish'd, Learned or Ignorant, in proportion as they esteem'd or despised the incomparable Works of some of the Ancients. But we must distinguish the times. The Age of *Alexander* and the Age of *Augustus* produced men who cannot be Eclips'd by any that succeeded them; and who serve for Models to all the Great Men ever since. The first *Romans*, of whom we are told so many wonders, were but very gross and unpolish'd, but their Rude and Wild Virtue was render'd human by their Conversation and Commerce with *Greece*, from whence they Learned their Arts and Knowledge and Politeness. After the Barbarians had ravaged the Empire, and burnt the famous Libraries the Divine works of the Ancients became so rare, that the use of them was almost intirely abolished. Barbarity and Ignorance prevailed, nor was Learning or a right Taste of it restored, till those Precious Ancient Monuments were recovered and raised from the darkness where they had lain buried. In effect, it is by the chief

chiefly we are taught to think Nobly, to express our thoughts properly and clearly, to make lively and natural Pictures, to give such a turn to the commonest things as illustrates and sets them off extreamly. Such as are not sensible of those Beauties in the Ancients, ought at least to be silent and not to censure what perhaps they do not Understand. Let them have some regard for the opinion of so many great Men who esteem them so highly. It is either a great mistake, or a great injustice to maintain, that the Universal esteem that has been paid to the Ancients in all Ages, is only an effect of prejudices; for it is next to impossible that so many good Judges should be deceived in a thing of that nature. It is true that Prevention and Prepossession is capable to do a great deal; And the common opinion is not always a certain proof of a true Merit. But as few general mistakes are of long duration, so an Universal approbation confirmed by many ages must be founded upon reality.

As to your objections against the Divine *Plato*, pray give me leave, *Madam*, to observe that to take the Character of a book from the Translation, is but a

very uncertain way of Judging of its Merit, let the Translator be e'r so skilfull; For it is almost impossible to give it the life and the beauties of the Original. An Author that's very agreeable in his own Tongue, becomes Barbarous or Insipid in a stranger Language. If Monsieur Voiture's Letters were Translated in an ordinary Latin, they woy'd be insupportable, tho' they are so full of gayety in the Original. The Latin translations of *Homer*, *Sophocles* and *Euripides*, &c. are so far from drawing those Divine Poets to the life, that they disfigure and mutilate and expose them, by Translating them dully word for word and literally; nothing of the right turn or order, or disposition; and not the least judgment or care of the propriety, or beauty, or elegancy of the Phrase and Expression. We may as well judge of *Virgil* in *Virgil travesty*: To know the Merit of an Author, one must be very well vers'd in his Language, must Read him with great care and attention, to distinguish what is fine, and what may be defective. How do the Pedants of the University expose *Aristotle*, and turn him daily into ridicule? How can they judge of the reasonings of that great Genius

or of the Beauty or Charms of his Expression, who hardly know the Alphabet or Characters of his Language? Those who compare *Cicero* and *Demosthenes*, or perhaps think them Inferior, to the Pleaders of our own Age, with what Justice or Knowledge do they give their Decisions? I own we have brought Eloquence to a great degree of Perfection, but still it must be acknowledged that there is yet some distance between Us and the Ancients. For my part, I consider *Demosthenes* and *Cicero* as two Extraordinary Men, on whom Nature had heap'd her Gifts and Bounty, to make them the Models of perfect Orators. Whoever reads their works may see it. Whoever are not touch'd with the Beauties, that Shine in them every where, are insensible and without Taste or Understanding. But it would be to no purpose to undeceive them. They deserve no better Treatment, than what a Company at Court receiv'd one day from the Prince of *Condé*: He was reading to them a Charming part of one of *Cicero's* pleadings, and when he saw they were not touch'd with it, he shut the Book, without saying a word, or giving himself the trou-

ble to shew them the Force and Eloquence of that great Orator, who had so wonderful a Talent of Perswading, that *Cæsar* himself, ev'n when he was very Angry with him, could not stand the Force of his Arguments, and was obliged to pardon a Criminal, whom he had already Condemned.

The disgust which some of the Moderns have, is against the Ancient Poets, as well as the Orators. They will needs degrade *Homer*, from that high Reputation he has had, for so many Ages. They pretend his Poems are full of gross Faults; and they are not sensible of the *Sublime*, and the inimitable Beauty that shines every where in him. It must be acknowledged there are some Faults in *Homer*, but we ought to consider, that he's the first Man that took so vast a Carriere, and in a Country formerly unknown. Men do not become perfect but by frequent Reflections, and after a long course of Experience. The Faults that are in the Poems of *Homer*, are not all to be placed to the account of the Poet himself. We must blame the time in which he Liv'd. They had not the same Taste of Decency and Probability, as we have at present.

Men

Men are Polish'd and Refin'd, in so long a tract of time as since *Homer*. If the Men of those days had not the same Customs, and Manners, and Taste as we have now, that's not the fault of the Poet. He paints them Lively such as they were. We ought to consider the difference and not Subject their manners to ours. Decencies change with the Times ; and Opinions, and Customs, and Religion, are Subject to Vicissitudes. We see it by experience. What was the delight of our Grand-Fathers, appears to us now Ridiculous. The Poets who Liv'd a Hundred years ago, and were Admir'd and read with Pleasure, and got by heart, are now despised by the meanest of the People : Our Poesy has chang'd as well as our Fashions. The Cloaths of those times can serve for nothing but Masquerade. We must not bring the Manners of the Ancients to Ours ; we must go back to theirs, if we would Judge rightly of their Sentiments. The best of our own Works will have the same Fortune, when the Customs and the Taste are altered : So we are not to blame *Homer*, if his Descriptions answer not to our Ideas. The Palace and the Gardens of *Alcinous* appear very

Contemptible to us, who have seen the Magnificence of the House and Gardens of *Versailles*, and the other Palaces of Europe. It was *Homer's* misfortune that he had seen nothing like them in his time. When he describes a Feast, nothing is to be seen that comes near the Cleanliness, the Abundance, the Delicacy, the Order, or Taste, which Reign at our Tables. All favours of the Frugality and Simplicity of those times ; but it must be own'd that his Genius surpasses the Subject. The greatness of the Expressions raises the Mean-
ness of the matter he treats. He embellishes every thing he Touches; and he is Pompous and Magnificent on the most barren occasions. It is true there are some Faults, and negligences in *Homer*, but they are like Patches that set off the Beauty of the rest of the work. The most Skillful Painters do not Finish every part of their Pictures with the same care and exactness. The colou's are not equally bright every where. The light and the Shadow must be managed with Address, to produce the true effect. Nature it self does not give every one of its Works all the perfection that is possible ; nor is the World
all

all composed of fixed Stars, or Diamonds. Nature dispences her Treasures with Oeconomy. They who quarrel with those Negligences as a Crime in *Homer*, do not consider that a great Genius, wholly Employ'd about his Subject, does not descend to the lesser matters ; at least he makes a great difference between them and the principal Point. Experience shews us that those exact and Correct Authors are ordinarily but very indifferent Capacities, who stoop to little things, not being able to raise themselves to greater. They content themselves with a dry and Laborious Nicety, which requires only Time and Care. And yet these are the Men who Condemn the Ancients, because they are not Judges of their Excellencies.

I do not pretend by a positive and general Decision to prefer the Ancients to the Moderns : But I think I may say ; without injury to any Person whatsoever, that *Homer* and *Virgil*, *Demosthenes* and *Cicero*, have never yet been equall'd by any that have come after them ; and in all Appearance they never will be. I know that perhaps so Celebrated and admired Names may impose, by the force of their Authority : But how came they

they by this Fame and Authority ? And pray let us lay their Names aside, and examining only their Works themselves, let us see if we have any Poems that can be compared with the *Iliad*, or the *Odyssée*, or the *Aeneid*; or if we have any Pleadings or Harangues that can possibly be brought into competition with the Pleadings of *Demosthenes* or *Cicero*.

As to the Lives and Manners of Mankind, if I am not mistaken, they have been equally Vicious at all times; for soon after the very Infancy of the World Corruption prevail'd and became so general that God was obliged to sweep Men off the Earth by an universal Deluge. Those who succeeded, were not moved, by so Terrible an example, to amend their Lives Since that time the Successors have still follow'd the same steps, and we Live much at the same Rate as those that went before us. Galantry is one of the things in which we greatly exceed the Ancients, and certainly we have extremely refin'd in this Point. They made Love in a very gross and unpolish'd manner, and they were absolutly Ignorant of the Refinements of that Coquetry which is now in use among the Ladies of Europe, who are more soft, more complaisant, more fa-

vourable, and more polish'd, than they were formerly. This Politeness has contributed more than any thing to make them forget their Severity, the want of which, and of a just Pride and Reserve, give me leave to say, makes them less Amiable. It is a great mistake to think to gain the heart and esteem of Men by Complaisance and Easiness. It is not enough that a Woman is handsom; If she is not Modest and Reserv'd, her Beauty has not the half of its effect on Men of Spirit and Understanding. And it seems this is the Reason why they are not now adays so much Respected, and that they have lost that ascendant which they had formerly. The Liberty, which reigns in their Discourse, and in their actions, diminishes the Respect and Veneration that would be pay'd them: They are too forward, and too insolent: They drink too much Wine, and take too much Snuff; for tho' these things seem to be Indifferent, yet they have an Air of Debauchery, which Creates an ill Opinion of those who use them.

Luxury and Voluptuousness has, it is true, been the fault of Women of all Ages, tho' not always to the same Degree, nor so universally. Some of the Galants in *Rome* and *Greece*, but especially in

in *Asia* and the *East*, gave immense sums to pay the favours, and to feed the Luxury and Magnificence of their Mistresses. Particular persons in those times were much richer than we are, any where, at present. A Mistress, in those days, was able to be at the expense of a Statue of *Venus*, as a complement in gratitude, which was worth a Million of Gold. *Diogenes* the Cynick, who's profession it was to censure the Faults and Vices of his Age, wrote on the Pedestal of this Statue, *This is a Monument of the Incontinency of the Greeks.*

The *Romans* imitated the *Greeks*, and at last outdid them, in their Profusion and Magnificence in their Pleasures. The publick Shows and Spectacles they gave in *Rome*, at so vast an expence, are a great Proof of this. All sorts of Beasts were brought from the outmost parts of the Earth, to satisfy the Curiosity of the Spectators, and to raise themselves by those Liberalities to the first honors of the Republick. That wild and Warlick People that had been bred to the Camp and Fatigues, and accustomed to a hard and sober Life, grew weary of this Frugality, after they had seen and Robb'd the Riches of the *East*. Softness

ness, and Magnificence, and Luxury, and all the Eastern Pleasures and Vices, which were formerly unknown, were brought into *Rome* with their Riches. Since that time, Liberty and Licentiousness have had no limits. As the *Romans* had an infinite deal of Wit, they refined on those Pleasures. They Studi-ed and improv'd them, and employ'd all their art and invention to make them more Tasty, by new Ragous and Sawces. If we believe *Juvenal*, and other Au-thors, the Ladies of *Rome* carried De-bauchery and Impudence to the last ex-cess. After they had drown'd their Reason and Modesty in Wine, they kept no Measures, but gave themselves up, without Shame, to all the disorders of their utmost desires. However Licens-tious some Ladies of this age may be, yet they have much more reserve and con-duct than those Wives of the mighty Con-queros of the world.

I believe, Madam, it is impossible to resolve the question you ask me, as to the beauty of the Greek and Roman Woman in respect of ~~ours~~. One cannot judge without seeing and comparing them to-gether. The Ancient Statues, which are preserv'd from the injuries of time, are

are Models of perfect and accomplish'd Beauties. But who knows if Art has not added to Nature? Or if they are not productions of pure Invention? Perhaps neither *Helen* nor *Cleopatra* were the greatest Beauties of their own time. Thousands of other Women, who liv'd more obscurely, might probably have eclipsed them, if the mere merit of Beauty had been consider'd. But their Quality and Adventures made them famous. The Verses of *Homer*, the burning of *Troy*, and the destruction of a considerable Kingdom in *Asia*, have made *Helen* famous, and given a new lustre to her Charms. The passion which *Cleopatra* kindled even in *Cesar* as well as *Mark Anthony*; the Part she had in *Anthony's* adventures, whom she made lose both his life and the Empire of the World; the Courage she shew'd in her Voluntary death, which she chose, to avoid the disgrace that *Augustus* had prepared for her, for he designed to bring her to *Rome* to Adorn his Triumph; all this has contributed extreamly to swell the Idea we have of the Beauty of the Queen of Egypt. We may say of the Beauty of the Body, as of that of the Mind, that it appears greater when it is seen thro'

thro' a Succession of so many ages: This distance gives it a life and lustre. I doubt not there have been in all times, and are at present, many Women as handsom, or handsomer than *Helen* or *Cleopatra*; But they make less noise and bustle, and are not expos'd on so remarkable a Theatre.

You are in Pain, you say, Madam, to know something as to *Fairies*, and what is their Origin. Why, it is purely Chimerical; and all that's said of them is Fabulous; invented by Nurses to make Children sleep. Or their origin may partly be Attributed to an Opinion which some Philosophers have had, that the Elements are inhabited by different People or *Genii*, some in the Water, some in the Air, some in the Earth, and some in the Fire. I know you have read a Book with some Pleasure, Madam, which treats of these Curiosities. Those Philosophers said that those *Genii* appeared frequently to Men, and perhaps this may be one Foundation of the Prodigies we are told of *Fairies*.

The name of *Fairies* was first given to certain Women, who were consider'd as Prophetesses, who pretended to Divination, and amused People with false

false Hopes built on false Predictions. Their Reputation grew strangely about the time of the first *Croisades*. They who made those Voyages told an Infinity of Extraordinary things, and wonders which they thought they had seen. Those who repeated what they had told added many Circumstances, of their own Invention; so that those Stories, the farther they went from the Fountain, grew more and more Fabulous. The Fictions of *Tasso*, and *Ariosto*, and the Power which these two Poets give to certain Magicians, have renew'd the Notions which former times had of *Fairies*, who were honored as Divinities of a second Order. For you know, the Pagans held a difference of Merit and Dignity in their Deities. The *Fairies* were of the middle Rank of Divinities. It was believed that they were concern'd about the Affairs of Mankind: Surprizing qualities were attributed to them; a Power to transport themselves in a moment from one place to another, how distant soever; to build Magnificent Palaces, and to destroy them in a moment; to give immense Treasures and Riches to those who could Merit their Favours.

The

The Stories of *Fairies*, as all other Fables, were at first intended for the instruction of those for whom they were made. But in a little time they became so contemptible, by the fabulous circumstances which were daily added, and so ridiculous, that they were left only to Nurses, for keeping their Children from crying, and for putting them asleep. The Pagans, who would at any rate derive their Origin from some Divinity, when the belief of Fairies was establish'd, descended even to them, and chose them for their Ancestors; for tho' they were only Subaltern and Modern Divinities, yet still they were more than Mankind, and that was enough to flatter the Vanity of such as pretended to a Nobility of Descent and Original.

What is said of *Melusina*, has resemblance enough to the false Notions of the Heathens. I know not if those of the Family of *Lusignan*, pretended to make their Origin more Illustrious, by adopting that Fairy or rather that Monster, half Woman and half Serpent; which built the Castle of *Luzignan*, which was believed to be impregnable; but it was taken by the Huguenots

in 1569. What is told, I say, of this *Melusina*, is nothing but Fiction, and Stories made at pleasure; tho' many of the Family of *Luzignan* have believed and repeated them for certain Truths. What illusion is it to believe what's told of the Groans and Cries of this Fairy, when the Tower of *Luzignan* was demolished? And that she used to appear in a long mourning habit on the Top of a house, when any Misfortune was to happen to any of the Family! These Fables might be believed in Gross and Superstitious times, but they can expect no Faith in ours. Our Taste is too good, to swallow such Fictions.

In the mean time we may be reproached with a Madness which prevail'd here in *France* for some time, of Reading those Romances about Fairies. But this disease did not last long, and the extravagancy of those silly books, in which there was neither Life, nor Sense, nor Reason, was soon discovered. It was a wonder indeed to see that what was invented, only to divert Children, had become of a sudden, the amusement of the most serious persons. The Court was infatuated with those fictions; The

City follow'd the ill example of the Court, and read with greediness those monstrous adventures, which have neither Probability nor Connexion. But at last this Frenzie is cur'd ; and the Fables of *Fairies* are banish'd, I hope for ever.

The *Sibylls* are not, as the *Fairies*, Persons purely Imaginary. Both Sacred and Profane Histories have spoken of the *Sibylls*, and have cited their Prophe-tick Verses. Their Number is not agreed on. Some reckon Ten, and some Tweive ; but in all appearance the same Person is multiplied. I think three different ones may be found. She of *Delphos* was one of the most Famous and most Ancient ; for she Prophesied a long time before the War of *Troy*. Some Historians call her *Daphne*, and say she was the Daughter of *Tiresias*. *Virgil* has made one of those *Sibylls* famous ; to whom he gives the name of *Deiphobe*. She was originally of *Cimmeria*, a little town of *Cumæ* in *Campania*, not far from *Naples*. Both Greek and Latin Authors make frequent mention of this *Sibyll*. It was she whom the Pious *Æneas* went and consulted, for his Adventures,

and the means he should use to find his old Father *Archises* in the Elisian Fields. This *Sibylla Cumaea*, is not the same with the *Sibylla Cumana*, who was called *Demophile*, and *Amalthea*. It is she for whom the *Romans* had the greatest Veneration. They preserved her Books with great Care, and consulted them on the most important occasions. But they were Burnt with the Capitol. In *Sylla's* time, the Senate took Care to pick up all that could be found any where, of those Verses of the *Sibylls*; but among the true ones a great deal of Counter-band was mix'd, which particular Persons had made after their own Fancy. The *Sibylls* were Heathen Maids who gave themselves to Prophesie and Predictions, in a Mysterious and Enigmatick manner: Their Verses were somewhat like our *Nostradamus*, which are best expounded after the thing is come to pass. Then strange efforts are made to find the Relation between the Event and the Prediction, and a Sense in the Verses of *Nostradamus*, which Perhaps the Prophet never thought of.

Here is a short account, Madam, of the Verses and Oracles of the *Sibylls*,

which

which the Heathens consulted with so much Veneration. Amongst these Prophetick Verses, some clear enough Predictions were found concerning the coming of the Messiah; and several particular Circumstances of his Life and Death. I shall not now enter into an Enquiry about the Legitimacy of those Verses, but it is certain that the Ancient Fathers, and particularly S. *Augustine*, in his 18th. book *de Civitate Dei*, have cited them as an Argument, *ad hominem*, against the Heathens, who acknowledged the truth of those Verses

The Origin of *Giants* is more certain and better founded than that of *Fairies* or *Sibylls*; for the Holy Scripture speaks of them expressly in several places. They were nothing but monstrous Men, above the ordinary size of Mankind. It is said in the 17th. Chap. of the 1st book of *Kings*, that *Goliath*, a *Giant* of the *Philistines* was six Cubits, which is nine Foot, high; and that his Coat of Armour weigh'd five Thousand Shekels, which is near three Hundred Pound of our Weight, It is certain therefore that there were *Giants*, and in this Point we must submit to the plain Assertion of holy Scripture

ture. But whether there were whole Nations of Giants I shall not determine, tho' some passages of Scripture seem to say it pretty clearly ; as may be seen in the 6th. Chap. of Genesis, *In those days there were Giants on the Earth, for the Sons of God, came in to the Daughters of Men, they bare Children to them; the same became Mighty Men, which were of old, Men of Renown.* Perhaps those deform'd and monstrous Children were given as a punishment of the Vices of Men, and this Race that's spoken of here, was exterminated by the Flood with the rest of corrupt Mankind. Some think that the *Land of Giants* signifies a people monstrously Vicious, and of a Prodigious strength to commit Wickedness. Ovid says in his *Metamorphoses*, that the Giants declar'd War against *Jupiter*, and that they heap'd Mountains upon Mountains, in order to Scale Heaven. I believe Ovid had read what's said in the Scripture, of the vain attempt of Men in building the Tower of *Babel*, to secure themselves against a second Deluge. But that Chimerical Project was interrupted by the confusion of Languages.

Madam,

Madam, I have one Article of your Letter yet to Answer. You say, you cannot believe that the first Men liv'd to the Age of eight or nine Hundred Years; and if it be true that they did, you are sorry you did not come into the World in those days, that you might have had the pleasure of living so long. Tho' you love a little Raillery, and can give an Air of gayety to every thing, yet I don't imagine that seriously you take living long to be so great a Happiness. When we consider the Vanities, the Cares, the Traverses, the InfirmitieS and Troubles of this Ignorant and Wicked World, we find a Life even of one Hundred years to be very burthensom, and we may say of Life as is said of Riches, he that increaseth it increaseth Trouble.

But for my part, Madam, I should be very sorry you had liv'd before the Deluge, because by that means you should not live now, but in History; and our Age should be depriv'd of the pleasure of seeing and hearing the most lovly and agreeable Person upon Earth, and who, you know, is most given to disputing.

But to return to our Question, give me leave to say, Madam, that it is a thing which it is not permitted to doubt of. The point is decided in the Holy Scripture. Read the 5th Chapter of *Genesis*, where you see a long series of the Posterity of *Adam*; their names, and the names of their Children; at what Age they began to have Children; the number of years they Lived; all mark'd with the most Accurate exactness. It is but a weak defence to say that their Years and Months, were not reckon'd as ours are at present. You'll reject this reason as Frivolous, Madam, if you do with any attention examine what the same Historian says expressly in the end of that Chapter; that *Malaleel* liv'd eight Hundred Forescore and Fifteen years; that *Henoch* the Father of *Mathusalem* liv'd but three Hundred Sixty five years; that *Mathusalem* the Son liv'd to nine Hundred Sixty and nine years; the same Historian, a few lines after, that is, in the beginning of the 6th. Chapter of *Genesis*, says that God being provok'd by the Crimes that were committed on the Earth, resolv'd to abridge the Life of Man and that hereafter he should live but Sixscore years: Now would

would it not be contrary to all appearance of Truth or Probability, to say that *Moses* when he speaks of the Lives of the Patriarchs, uses away of Computation quite different from that wherein he expresses the abridging the life of Man to Sixscore years? This seems to me to be a Demonstration which admits of no Answer.

After the Deluge, Men, in effect, liv'd not so long. That great Flood, and the Universal fumble of all things, might alter the Temperament of the Air and Earth, and of the Bodies of Men. And whereas formerly they had liv'd on Fruits and Herbs, they found themselves obliged afterwards to eat Flesh; the juice whereof as it is stronger and more nourishing for the present support of life, yet it is probable that this very strength wears and consumes the Vessels in a shorter time; And so the Decree of God may be executed by very natural Causes.

Madam, I think I have answer'd something to every one of your Doubts. If you had proposed so many Curious Questions to a man of greater Abilities, he would have resolv'd them with a more profound erudition. But for me, that is
not

not my Role. I do not set up for Learning ; and I should be in the wrong to do it. If I had been at *Paris*, perhaps with the help of my Books and my Remarks, I might have given you some things more *Sublime* on all the points you proposed : Or if I would have mus'd longer on them, or put my self to the Torture, you might have had more satisfaction from my Answers. But I own my Indolence, and that I can bear nothing that constrains me, or makes me uneasy. I love rather not to appear Learned, than to depart from my Nature, which loves what is plain and simple and easy, and which all the World may readily understand.

I am, Madam,

Tours, &c.

The

The Fourth
LETTER

BY A

Lady of the Court of *France*,
to Monsieur *L' Abbé de Bellegarde*.

SIR,

I'M in a terrible Passion against a very honest Man, of your acquaintance with whom I dispute frequently on all sorts of subjects, as much as I am capable to carry on the War. He would never Marry, either from an antipathy, or a Contempt of our Sex. He affects to bring me often on this Subject, and says biting things, to the disadvantage of Women, whom he places in the lowest story, and undervalues them infinitely in respect of Men. He confounds me with Reasons to which I have not a word to answer; but I'm perswaded the fault lies rather in my Ignorance, than in the Cause I defend. Therefore, pray Sir,

Sir, furnish me with Arms, both offensive and defensive, to deal with this formidable Enemy : For as the Neighbourhood of our Lands obliges us to be often together, whilst I am in the Country ; and because he loves to dispute perpetually, and I am not of the humor to yield without striking a stroke, I would wish to have good Reasons to fight against his. You see in short what I would have, but that you may enter more fully into my thought, I shall tell you whereupon he builds his principal objections. He lays it down, for a principle ; that Women are Inferior to Men both in Heart and Understanding. This is his Position, and he pretends to prove it from the temperament of Women, which is not so proper, as that of Men, neither for Study nor Government, nor War ; all which fall to the share of the Men. He supports his reasons by the suffrage and wisdom of Antiquity, which has always as much as possible, kept Women at a distance from publick employment, and confin'd them within Walls, to the management of domestick affairs. Is it in effect because they are not Capable of any thing else ? Or are not rather the Men to be blam'd who made those Laws ; and

and did not Justice to the Women? I do not ask your Assistance with a design to make an ill use of the Reasons you shall give me. I do no ways pretend that Women ought to be Independant, or withdraw themselves from the Authority of the Men. Laws, and Use, and Custom, have subjected them; and every thing must be content with its condition. My design is only to have the pleasure of disputing and to keep my ground. I am born with a good deal of Pride and Vanity. I blush and suffer a very sensible Mortification, when I cannot Answer. I am not so much perswaded as stun'd by my Enemies reasons. Pray therefore send me some Auxiliary Troops to support me in this new kind of War. I will not be contented with repulsing the Enemy. I'll attack him in his Trenches. Cite me abundance of examples of Heroick Women, who have Signaliz'd themselves in something or another; in Sciences, in Government, or any of those things which Men have unjustly enhanc'd to themselves, and which the Women perhaps would discharge with no less Honour, if they were call'd or admitted to them. I'll expect your Answer with Impatience.

tience. Send me some rude draught as soon as possible, for the present danger. Afterwards you shall treat it at more leisure and more accurately, if you have a mind to it, and if your other Affairs allow it.

I am Sir,

Your most Humble
Servant.

Mon.

Monsieur L'Abbé de Bellegarde's

ANSWER

TO THE

FOURTH LETTER,

*If Women are Inferior to Men in
Spirit and Understanding, &c.*

Madam,

THE Men made the Laws, without calling the Women to their Assistance. If they had been of the Council, probably Things had gone quite otherways; And they would have wanted neither Reasons nor Skill to maintain their Rights and to preserve the Balance between them and the Men. Justice has not been done them, and they have reason to complain of ill Usage.

An Ancient said that Women were born for retreat and quiet; that their greatest merit consisted in living unknown and

and without either praise or reproach ; and that the most Virtuous were they who were least talk'd of. This Philosopher thought them no ways capable of publick Employment, and he was Absolutely for their staying at home, buried in the obscurity of their own Family, without any other busines but that of bringing up their Children, to be useful Subjects to the State. I believe this Philosopher may be so far in the Right, that a Woman's principal Employment ought to be the care of her Children ; but as all Women have not Children, nor at all times, I think we do them injustice, in pronouncing them universally incapable of other Employments. I believe they would discharge the greatest Trusts, with Success and Honor ; and they could attain to the Perfection of Arts and Sciences, if they were put to Study them betimes, and if they had the same Education that's given to the Men.

This may seem a Paradox to those who are led by common Prejudices to think that Women are Inferior to Men in all Respects ; or if they are forc'd to acknowledge that some of them have great Qualities and a singular Merit, they

they pretend that any Good they have, is spoil'd by the Imperfections that are inseparable from their Sex, and which ought to keep them at a distance from Publick Employments. Even the Women themselves, being so accustom'd to this Exclusion, are come to think 'tis their Natural State; and Believe themselves incapable of any greater thing. Laws, and Custom, and Prejudice, have ratifyed and confirm'd this Ancient Dependance. The Delicacy of their Sex, makes them unfit for the Rudeness and Fatigues of some hard Employments, and obliges them of necessity to keep at home. This weakness of their Constitution has been chiefly the reason why, they have been consider'd from the beginning, to be Inferior to the Men who are able to endure the more robust exercises. And their domestick Affairs, for which they are design'd, have been a general hindrance of their Education in Arts and Sciences. But this does not prove that they are incapable of them. Many of them have not only the same, but stronger Dispositions and Capacity than the Men. They learn every thing with a wonderful Readiness and Facility. Yea they know many things without

out Study, which Men do not acquire without a great deal of Pain and Labour. They are much more polish'd and agreeable in Civil Society : and it is chiefly by Conversation with them, that we learn Civility and Politeness. The School of the World is principally in their Company, and that's better than all the Learning and Affectation of Colleges and Pedants. Their very Ignorance is gay and agreeable, and is to be preferr'd to the Melancholy and troublesome Erudition of the Learned. They speak with more Order and Agreeableness, and they are never at a loss for want of what to say, provided the Conversation be on things that are proper for them. That insinuating way, in which they propose their reas ons, persuades more than a thousand Syllogisms in Form, proposed in a dry and haughty manner. And in one thing they eminently shine and excel, much beyond the Men, which is their Talent of expressing themselves Justly, and choosing the properest terms to give a clear Conception of what they would say ; for tho' they do not invent new Words, yet one would think that those they make use of, had been made on purpose to express their present thoughts.

thoughts. 'Tis this that gives that agreeable Air to all they say, which delights and charms all who hear them.

So that those who pretend that they are less perfect than the Men, say it at a venture, and can give no other proof but the Authority of the Men, which is very much to be suspected in this Case, because they are both Judge and Party, and have been at Pains, or have affected, in all times, to diminish the Women as much as they could. But experience destroys all their False Reasons; for an infinity of Women have given great Proofs, upon all occasions, of a solid Understanding, a high and eminent Virtue, and an exact Conduct. Some of them have govern'd the greatest Empires with as much prudence and equity as the most accomplish'd Men could have done. Even the Military heroick Virtue, which seems inconsistent with the softness and timidity of their Sex, has been found in some Women in an eminent degree: And no doubt there would be more frequent examples of it, if they had more opportunities, and were put to the Tryal. But Custom and their Dependance hinder them to show themselves.

This great Distinction and Dependance which Custom and the Pride of the Men have introduced, are contrary to Nature, which has made the two Sexes equal, if we consider them in general. A subordination indeed, between Husband and Wife is reasonable; but this Subordination ought to be Mutual. They have their different Provinces in the Administration of their common concerns. Some things fall to the share of the Husband, and others to the Wife: And this too, Varies considerably, according to the Age, and Quality, and Health, and Constitution, and the other Circumstances of the several Persons. Nor can the Partition be made by any other Rules than these, and their own Promises and Agreements between themselves. The Wife therefore is to submit and be subordinate to the Husband in those Affairs which are his Province, and the Husband to the Wife in what is hers. Their Duties and Engagements are Reciprocal, and therefore Subordination ought to be mutual also. And the Submission of the Wife is purely Voluntary, in its origin, as well as the Husband's. She engages her self of her own free Will and Choice, and that, at a time, when she is

is capable of Choosing, and of Governing herself by her own Reason.

But whatever share the Wife appropriates to herself, of the common concerns; her Mind is not to be confined within that narrow Circle. May not she improve her Understanding in Knowledge and Learning? Are not Women as capable of the sublimest Improvements as the Men are? Or is there any difference of Sex in the Rational Soul? The whole Difference between Man and Woman, consists either in their Bodies or in their Education. Different Air, and Climate, and Nourishment and Exercises, and Application, and Company, give different Constitutions and Thoughts and Passions. And in these things, not only Men themselves, and particular Persons, but intire Nations are different from one another. Since Custom therefore and Education, makes so great a difference amongst particular Men, and even whole Nations, why should we wonder if it make some difference between Man and Woman? We do not breed Women to study and learning when they are young, which is as much as excluding them from it: But this Exclusion is not founded on any natural

Incapacity or unfitness. On the contrary, their dispositions are greater than those of Men; for their Temperament and Organs are more Delicate.

I know it is objected that Study is neither necessary nor useful to their Sex, because they are not admitted to those Employments for which Learning and Study are necessary Accomplishments. As the Affairs of the World now are order'd, we do not see Women mount the Chair or the Pulpit, to make Publick Harangues, or to give Lectures of Philosophy or Theology. They are not call'd to sit on our Benches, to render Justice to the People. To what purpose therefore would Sciences serve them, but to make them more Vain and Troublesome? Learning in them, would produce the same effects as Riches and Prosperity do in thole who were born in an obscure Condition; Make them look down upon their Equals with contempt and haughtiness.

But this and all such objections are founded on very false Maxims. Learning is so far from corrupting the Mind, that it rectifies and adjusts it; and since Pride is both an effect and a certain mark of Ignorance, what can be more Proper

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than true knowledge of our selves and other things, to inspire us with Modesty, and to govern our Passions, and moderate our desires ? Nor can it be denied that Women have given many evident Demonstrations of their Capacity for the greatest Dignities and Employments ; nor are they Universally excluded from them ; and who can say that the Exclusion which has been Introduced will be perpetual ? But as to the mere Point of Conversation, if early pains were taken to fill their Minds with useful knowledge, their Company and Society would be to better purpose, more agreeable, and more Innocent. What can we expect they should speak of, when they know nothing ? Only sensible things affect them and employ their consideration, and they have no other subject to discourse of. What they see, and what they hear, their Pleasures, their Chagrins, their Intrigues, their Quarels, their Law-Suits, their Servants and Domestick Affairs, their Petticoats and Gowns and Dresses, are inexhaustible Subjects of Conversation. And it were happy they could keep to that. But when those Fonds are drain'd, Calumny and Censure, is the Resource, and opens

a vast Field of Entertainment. It is not always from a premeditated design of doing hurt that they are so Cruel in speaking Evil of others, Only they must speak, and they have no other thing to say. But were it not more Commendable to Furnish them with better Subjects? And indeed, were it not better for them to be quiet, than to tear others in Pieces, without pity, by satirical Invectives, which raise the Indignation of most of the Hearers. Those Persons who are given to this Vice of speaking ill of others, mistake the matter extremely, to think that this shows their Wit, or good Humor. Even those who seem to applaud them in the Company, look upon them with Horror, and shun them as the Pest. For they spare no body; not even themselves, after they have vomited their Poyson against others. Now, if they were allow'd to Read, and to Cultivate their Minds with useful Knowledge, since they express themselves much more finely than the Men, their Conversation would be infinitely more Agreeable and Charming.

Education and Knowledge might also be a help to them for advanceing their Fortune. *Athenais*, the daughter of the

Philo.

Philosopher, *Leontius*, is a clear proof of this. Her Father, having instructed her to a great degree in all Sciences, left her no other inheritance, that he might leave the more to his two Sons, being perswaded that her Merit and Knowledge would be to her in place of Riches, and raise her Fortune. *Athenais*, finding her self reduc'd to want, by her Father's Will, complain'd of this Injustice to *Pulcheria*, the sister of *Theodosius* the younger. That great Princess, being charm'd with the Wit and Merit of *Athenais*, took her into her own Family, and by a carefull instruction converted her to the Christian Religion. At her Baptism she got the name of *Eudoxa*. Sometime after, *Theodosius* the younger Married her and set her on the Throne of the Eastern Empire; as a reward of her Merit and Knowledge.

The Indolence or Laziness of Women may be reckon'd a hindrance too in their acquisition of Sciences. And their Inconstancy is no friend to that full and thorough Search and Examination that's necessary in finding out the Truth. But these are faults that it is in their own Power to correct. And whenever they give themselves the trouble and leisure, they show

show that they are not only as capable but more than the men to penetrate into the most hidden parts of Knowledge ; and sometimes they carry their Reflections to a sublimer degree of Perfection. Their Imagination is more lively, and their Memory happier ; Their penetration is more prompt and subtil : They conceive all the Circumstances more neatly and distinctly, and that's the reason they express themselves with so much clearness and facility. But they are not all alike : Some have more Vivacity and Judgment than others, and there is no less difference amongst them than amongst the Men. But what I have observed, is of both Sexes in general.

If Women love to employ themselves about Trifles, it is because they get a bias that way by their education, and the busines that's given them, to keep them in Ignorance. They are generally content with their condition and do not murmur. The example of other Women, a kind of Decency that has prevail'd, their Constraint and Subjection, their domestick affairs which take up much of their time, the common prejudices which have joyn'd something that's Ridiculous to the Idea of a learned

ed Woman, their Gaming and Diversions ; All this comforts them, and hinders them to complain of their Destiny.

The Modesty and Decency of their Sex too is an obstacle to their Application to Study and Learning. Men only take the employment of teaching Sciences. A young Woman is not in safety but under the eyes of her Mother or Governess : And some of them have pay'd dear enough for their curiosity, and for trusting themselves to Masters who taught them Lessons of Love, instead of Maxims of Learning and Knowledge. All the World knows the Adventures of *Heloisa* and *Abelardus*. Besides that of her Reputation, her losses were great, on account of her Master ; and he pay'd in a very Tragical manner for the liberties he took with his Scholar. There cannot be too much Precaution in preserving the Vertue and Honour of young Women, who are not to be ventured in dangerous occasions.

The Care which Women take of their Beauty, and appearing agreeable to the Men, and to outshine other Women, is another great Obstacle to their Study of knowledge. The Compliments that are

are made them on their Charms, on their Singing or Dancing, or Dressing, flatter their Self-love and Vanity, and make them forget all other things. Balls and Comedies and Assemblies are more agreeable to them than all the Science in the World. And those who do know any thing that's curious in Learning, they dare not speak of it amongst other Women, who either do not understand; or are afraid to be eclipsed; or have an humor of treating Learning as Pedantry and Ridiculous.

The Study of Learning is proper only for Women of a distinguished birth and condition. The poorer sort are obliged to gain their living by their Labour, and have neither time nor encouragement for Learning. It is quite otherwise with the Men. Their Knowledge, by fitting them for employments, may repair the disadvantages of a Narrow Fortune.

But these are only accidental differences, or the Faults of some Women which may be easily corrected. My general position, holds good still, that there is no want of natural disposition in Women, or rather that they are more Capable than the Men; That it is only Custom
and

and Education and Prejudice that excludes them from showing their Talents and their fitness for any Employment or Elevation.

The Men have not only made Laws to maintain themselves in their unjust Usurpation, but, not content with this, they reproach the Women with a Thousand Faults and Imperfections, with great injustice and partiality ; That they are naturally Volage, Indiscreet and Giddy ; That Love and Interest expose them to perpetual Faults ; that it is an unpardonable Indiscretion to trust them with a Secret of any Importance ; that they are blindly devoted to those they Love, and can conceal nothing from them. This I confess may be true enough as to some Women ; but are not some Men every bit as guilty of Blabbing out a Secret ? Can they conceal any thing from their Mistresses ? And are not Levity and Inconstancy, and impotent Passions, the Weaknesses of Men as well as of Women ? Only with this difference, that the Men are more Inexcusable, because of their Education.

It is a great Injustice to condemn Women in general ; and it would be a great Folly to praise them without distinction.

on. They deserve neither all the Ill nor all the Good, that's said of them. The Men, who complian of them, are the first who spoil them by their Flatteries. They would have fewer faults, if we burnt less Incense to them. If they are Haughty and Despise us, it is because we Bow and Creep before them. If they are Libertine and Coquette, do not we our selves seduce them? Is it not to please us that sometimes they forget themselves? Vices and good Qualities, Faults and Perfections, are so equally divided amongst Men and Women, that all the good or ill that's said of one Sex, may very justly be said of the other; they are equally Susceptible of good or ill Impressions, and there is nothing so Wicked, nor so Virtuous, of which they are not equally Capable. And Women are every way as fit for the Administration of Domestick or Publick Affairs as the Men, if they were equally bred to it.

This Truth is more fully seen by Examples. All Histories, both Ancient and Modern are full of them. Without going back to the farthest times of Antiquity, let us take a View of the Conduct and Government of Elizabeth

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Queen of England; Which alone is a Demonstration that Women are capable of every thing that's Great; and that we are very much in the wrong when we make general Accusations of their Weaknesses and Imperfections, or being Inferior to Men in any thing. She was but Six and Twenty, when she ascended the Throne of *England*. That high Air of Grandeur which she had from her Father, with a certain Sweetness and Affability that were Natural to her, kept her People in Respect and Duty, without shocking them. The Measures she took, in the Government of the State, may serve as a Model to the greatest Princes, and the wisest Politicians. The Troubles and Revolts which were rais'd in her Reign, obliged her to use Severity to some of the Great Men. But she was forc'd to it by the necessity of the times; to maintain the safety and honor of the Government; and she can hardly be reproached with any cruel Executions but that of *Mary Queen of Scotland*. Books and Knowledge lay for the most part Buryed, till that time, in Ignorance and Barbarity, yet *Elizabeth* had more Learning than generally Women have even at present. At the Age of

of Seventeen, she understood the Latin and Greek : She translated two Orations of *Iſocrates* from Greek into Latin : Besides her own natural Language, she spoke both French and Italian with great Facility, and German, and Latin, and Greek. To support her own Authority, she had the Address to form different Parties and Factions, and to keep them up as far as she thought fit ; and then crush'd them very skillfully when she had no farther use for them. In prudence and Politique she continued all those who had been of the Council of her Predecessor Queen Mary, tho' they were of a different Religion, and had Persecuted her in the Reign of her Sister. Yet she had never any confidence in them, and made no great use of their Advice. It may be said of them, *that they were of the Court, but not of the Council.* She amused them with long disputes on the Controverted Points of the two Churches ; but she took such measures, without their knowledge as were proper to bring about her own Designs. It is wonderful that a Woman could have so much Courage, and Firmness, and Intrigue, and Prudence, as to be able so long to resist the two greatest Kings of Europe ; tho

tho' she was but Queen of a small Kingdom, and was involv'd for several years, in the War of *Ireland*, which put her to excessive Charges. *Henry the second of France* had declar'd his Son *Francis*, the *Dauphine*, King of *England*, because he was Married to *Mary Queen of Scotland*. *Philip the Second, King of Spain*, would revenge the Injuries and Honor of *Katherine of Spain*, whom *Henry the 8th.* had Divorc'd; but notwithstanding all his Attacks, and all his Menaces, she remained still Fortunate and Victorious. Almost all the Princes of *Europe* made Addresses to her to Marry her, but she had a Mind to Reign alone, and had the wonderful Art to amuse every one of them, in his turn, with some Hope and Expectation, as long as it was for her Interest. The *Dukes of Anjou*; and *Alenzon*. The *Arch Duke of Austria*, and the *King of Sweden*, made Court to her a long time, without perceiving that she laught at them. By the perpetual Success of her Councils and Arms, she became at last very Formidable, both to Foreign Princes and to her own Subjects; and an incomparable Pattern of the Art of Government.

In the Account which the Ancients have given of *Zenobia*, Queen of *Palmyra*, they have left us an Idea of a wonderful accomplish'd Woman. The Emperor had associated her Husband, *Odenatus* in the Empire. But he was Assassinated soon after, by a Kinsman, who was Envious and Jealous of his Greatness. *Zenobia* lost not her Courage, tho' she lost her Husband in so Tragical a manner. She took Possession of the Sovereign Power in the name of her Children, and made her self be Proclaim'd Queen. She continued, with a Heroick Gallantry, the War which her Husband had begun against the *Persians*; and she beat their Generals, in Person, upon several occasions. She boasted of her being descended from *Cleopatra*, and *Ptolemy*, King and Queen of *Egypt*. Her Reputation much Eclipsed the glory of the Emperor *Gallienus* who was then upon the Throne. It is said of them, that whilst He shew'd the heart of a Woman in the Body of a Man, She shew'd the Courage of a Man in the body of a Woman. She defeated the Army which he sent against her. Afterwards the Emperor *Aurelian* came to attack her with all the Force of the Empire.

pire. She went into *Antioch*, and with seventy Thousand of her Subjects, she resolv'd to defend that great Town to the last Extremity, tho' *Aurelian* had given a General Indemnity to all who would return to their Obedience. She came out into the open Field with her Army; but she was worsted, and *Aurelian* took *Antioch* and many other considerable places. Notwithstanding this ill Success, she rang'd her Army again in Battle, in the plains of *Emessa*, to stop the progress and Victories of the Emperor; but the *Palmyrenians* were cut to Pieces. The Queen not being able to resist the Fortune of the *Romans*, retired into the Town of *Palmyra*, which *Aurelian* resolv'd to Besiege, that he might put an end to the War. At this Siege he was wounded with an Arrow but not dangerously. One may Judge of the Esteem he had of *Zenobia*, by the fragments of a Letter he wrote to one of his Friends, about that time. *The Romans reproach me, for making War with a Woman, as if I Fought with her only; but I find a greater number of Enemies, than could be brought by any Man at their Head: But I hope the Gods, who never fail'd us in time of Need,*

will Prosper the Common-Wealth: He met
with more Resistance at the Siege, than
he expected, and therefore Endeavour'd
to have the place by Composition. He
wrote a Letter to Zenobia, conjuring her
to Surrender, and promising her her life
and a safe place of retreat, with all the
Honours due to her Quality. It was much
to this purpose: You ought to have done
of your own accord, what now I require of
you by this Letter: My orders are, that
you Surrender; and I give you these Con-
ditions; your Life shall be Sav'd, and you
shall pass it in a place which the Senate
shall appoint for you, with all proper marks
of Honor. Your Money and Jewels must
be put into the Treasury of the Empire.
But the Priviledges of the Palmyrenians
shall be preserv'd. The high Spirit of Ze-
nobia thought this Letter was very
haughty, and therefore she answered it
in a stile, which, as Vopiscus relates, was
very unsuitable to the Condition of her
Affairs. 'T was in these terms: Zenobia
Queen of the East to the Emperour Au-
relian. No Man ever durst demand of
me what you have done. It is Virtue only,
Aurelian, that ought to prevail in War.
You command me to give my self up into
your hands. Know you not that Cleopatra
chose

chose rather to die with the title of Queen, than to live in any other condition. We expect the Persians to our assistance. The Saracens Arm for us. The Armenians have declar'd in our favour. A Troop of Robbers in Syria have defeated your Army. Judge then what you are to expect, when all our Forces shall be joyn'd. We shall bring down that Pride, which now commands me to surrender, as if you were absolute Master of all things. This Letter, instead of making him ashamed, enflam'd Aurelian's Passion and Resentment. He push'd the Siege with more Vigour. He fought the Persians who were coming to relieve it, and cut them to pieces. After several other advantages, and exploits of War, he reduc'd Zenobia to extremity. When she despair'd of relief, being affraid to fall into the hands of Aurelian, she made her Escape in the Night, with a design to get into Persia. But Aurelian having notice of it, pursu'd her with his Horse, and took her Prisoner just as she was going to pass the River Euphrates. Madam, said he, You would needs have the Honour of making War with the Roman Emperours. You have despised their Arms, to usurp their Authority. Zenobia, in her disgrace, had a

mind above her Misfortunes. *Aurelian* seem'd astonish'd to see so much firmness in a Woman. He would not fully the glory of his Victories with the Blood of so great a Queen. He reserv'd her to adorn his Triumph. The *Palmyrenians* and their Town were both destroy'd. *Zenobia* was led in Triumph into *Rome*, all cover'd over with her own Jewels, which the Emperour had left her as marks of her Greatness and Distinction. The greatest objection against her Honour, is what's related by *Zosimus*, as to the Philosopher *Longinus*. This was the Great *Longinus*, the famous Grecian Orator and Critick, and who wrote the Treatise concerning the *Sublime* in Eloquence. She had call'd him from *Greece* to be her Master in the Greek Language and in Philosophy: And afterwards perceiving his great Capacity and Knowledge in every thing, She made him her Secretary of State and chief Minister. He encourag'd and counsel'd her to her great Undertakings, and supported her Mind with the highest Maxims, and he was the Author of the Answer she sent to *Aurelian*, when he required her to Surrender. When she was taken Prisoner, she laid all the blame of her Actions on her

Mini-

Ministers who had abused the weakness of a Woman, and particularly inform'd against *Longinus*. But I am much more inclin'd to believe that *Zofimus* was mistaken, than to suspect the Honour of *Zenobia*, whose Courage and Virtue, were so Illustrious and Heroical, and merited the Empire of the Universe. But who ever inform'd against *Longinus*, he was immediately put to Death ; which leaves an eternal Reproach on the Memory of *Aurelian*.

Tho' Pulcheria, the Daughter of *Arcadius* the Emperor, and Sister to *Theodosius* the younger, fought no Battels in Person, nor charg'd at the head of her Troops against a Roman Emperor, as *Zenobia* did ; Yet she had personal Merit sufficient to put her in the Balance with the greatest Men of Antiquity. She was but Sixteen years of Age, when *Theodosius* thought her worthy of sharing the Imperial Authority with himself. This choice did him no dishonor, and he relied on her in the greatest Affairs of the Empire. She had a most particular care of his Education and his Marriage. She did not give him a Wife that had been bred to the Softness or Pleasures of the Court ; but she gave him

the Accomplished *Athenais*, Daughter to
the Philosopher *Leontius*. The Emperor
growing Envious of the Lustre of his Si-
ster's Merit, and being ashamed to be
Eclipsed by a Woman, obliged her to
leave the Court and retire to a Country-
house: But the necessity of affairs, and
the ill use his Ministers made of their
Power, soon obliged him to recal her.
When *Theodosius* dy'd *Pulcheria* rais'd
Marcian to the Empire, and Married
him, but on express Condition, that he
should not use the privileges which
Marriage gave him; because she had
vow'd Virginity. This great Princess
did not confine her Care to the Tem-
poral affairs of the Empire: She us'd
her Authority to suppress the Hereticks,
who troubled the quiet of the Church,
and corrupted the Lives of Christians.
She call'd the General Council of *Chal-*
cedon; the Fathers of which gave her
the highest Praises, with the glorious
Title of *Defendress of the Faith*.

These Examples show sufficiently
that Women are capable of every thing
that's Great in the greatest Governments.
Perhaps one would wonder to see them
sit on our Benches, and decide, in the
Quality of Judges, the most important

Affairs

Affairs of the Government. But our wonder may soon be over, if we consider that *God Almighty*, who Governs all his Councils by Eternal Wisdom, chose *Deborah* to judge his own People, and to command in Person, the Armies of the *Israelites*, who had groan'd Twenty years under a hard Captivity. This Woman, who was Prophetess, and Judge, and General, Govern'd and Judg'd the People of *God* during the Space of Forty years; and they were in a very flourishing condition all the time of her Government.

And, as if God had thought fit to punish the Vanity and Injustice of the Men, by shewing what Women were capable to do in the greatest Conjunctions; When the Jews were reduc'd to another great extremity; and *Holofernes* the General of the *Affyrians* came and laid Siege to *Bethulia* with a formidable Army; Tho' there were many great Captains amongst the Jews at that time; yet *God* made Choice of a Woman to deliver his People from the desolation and servitude with which they were threatned. *Judith* was trusted with the execution of this great Undertaking; and tho' she was but very young; yet

she

she govern'd her self in this affair with all the Precaution and Prudence, and with all the Courage that could possibly be wish'd or imagined. A poor young Widow, who had been always accustom'd to Retirement, was not afraid at the sight of so terrible a Number and so compleatly Arm'd. *Bethulia* was thinking to Surrender to *Holofernes*, who had cut off all their Aqueducts, so that the Inhabitants were at the point of Perishing for want of Water. *Judith* was ready to sacrifice herself, and neglected no means, for raising the Siege. She pierc'd thro' the Enemies Camp, even to the Tent of *Holofernes*; and all her measures and exploits were so just, that she deliver'd her Country from so formidable an Enemy, in the manner which we all know. The Jews, in gratitude, made a publick Feast, which lasted three Months, in Honour of her Victory.

Queen *Esther* shew'd no less Courage than *Judith* for the safety of her Country. The Kings of *Babylon* were so Jealous of their own Greatness, and the Respect they requir'd to be pay'd to their Majesty, that they forbid, under pain of Death, all Persons of whatsoever Rank or Character, to present themselves

selves before them, without being called. But the misfortune of the Jews, who had all been Condemn'd to Dye, by the Artifices of *Haman*, the Favorite of *Ahasuerus* did so sensibly touch the Heart of that young Princess, that not minding the danger to which she exposed her Life, she chose rather to venture all than not to Endeavour their Safety and Deliverance. Her great Virtue and Courage were Rewarded with Success. She found favour with *Ahasuerus*. She represented to him how *Haman*, his Favorite, abusing his Authority, had resolved to extirpate all the Jews in his Dominions, tho' they were not only Submissive and intirely Peaceable under his Government, but had done Eminent Services to the Monarchy. The Beauty, the graceful Air, and the Eloquence, of *Esther*, couch'd *Ahasuerus*; and he granted without reserve, every thing she Demanded.

Profane History gives us an infinity of examples of Illustrious Women, who made themselves famous by all sorts of Vertues. When *Pætus Cecinna* was found Guilty of the Conspiracy against the Emperour *Claudius*, *Arria* the Wife of *Cecinna* often exhorted him to kill him.

self,

self, to avoid the reproach of dying by the hand of the Common Hangman. But perceiving his irresolution, she took a Poignard in his presence, and struck it into her Breast, to shew him an example, and to reproach him by her own intrepidity.

The famous *Lucretia*, the Wife of *Collatinus*, has been the wonder of all Succeeding Ages, for a Courage equal to her Beauty. Her Husband one day in conversation had indiscreetly boasted of her Beauty before *Sextus*, the Son of *Tarquin* King of *Rome*. *Sextus* going imediately to see her, became madly in Love; and consulting only the Violence of his Passion, he Forc'd and Ravish'd her, before any body could come to her Assistance. *Lucretia* could not think of outliving the Disgrace, and therefore having assembled her Friends and laid before them the Violence that had been done to her, she stab'd herself before them. This lamentable Scene rais'd such resentment and indignation in her Friends, and in the People, against the Family of *Tarquin*, that both They and the Kingly Government were expell'd out of *Rome* for ever.

It is a Vulgar Error to think that Women are more Light or Inconstant, or
that

that they have less Fidelity or Secrecy than the Men : For tho' some of them carry things to extremity, when they abandon themselves to Vice or Passion, yet it is certain, on the other hand, that they have given admirable proofs of Constancy and Firmness, and the greatest Heroick Virtues, when they chose the right side. Can we sufficiently admire that Incomparable Queen of *Caria*, I mean *Artemisa*, who has left to her Sex such an extraordinary Pattern of Conjugal Affection ? She always lov'd her Husband with an extreme Tenderness and Fidelity ; And when Death had forc'd him from her Arms, she resolv'd to die inconsolable, and in the mean time she us'd all possible means her invention could imagine, to immortalize her Affection and esteem for him. She built that Magnificent Tomb for him which afterwards was always reckoned one of the seven Wonders of the World. She shut her self up in it, and renounc'd all human Society. She mix'd his Ashes with a Drink she had prepar'd on purpose, and drank that whilst she was alive ; having the utmost satisfaction that she had done all she could, to die united to her Husband, whom she had lov'd with

with so great Tenderness and Sincerity.

How many Women have shew'd more Courage and Greatness of Soul in their Sufferings and Misfortunes, than the most generous Men could have done? How many of them have Brav'd the Cruelty of Tyrants and the most exquisite Torments, rather than betray a Secret that they had promis'd never to reveal? There's a Multitude of examples of such Heroines, in those times when the Roman Emperors gave occasion to frequent Conspiracies against them. The Women could look upon the preparations of their Torture with great Tranquility and Resolution, whilst the Men, even the Heads of the Conspiracies, terrified and trembling, betray'd their party and their Complices with an infamous Weakness and Infidelity. And a famous Lady of *Athens*, for not betraying a Secret with which She had been Trusted, suffered the most horrible torments with a Heroical Courage; and at last; to put it out of her own power to speak, she bit off her Tongue and spit it in the face of the Tyrant. The *Athenians* so much admir'd the Courage of this Heroine, that they made a very curious Statue for her, both

to

to perpetuate her own Memory, and the Fame of that Fidelity which she preserv'd inviolable, at the expence of her own Life.

And as to the matter of Knowledge and Learning, If the Women had the Advantages and Education which the Men have, if they were allow'd to begin to Study betimes, and to make it their busines, they would far outshine the Reputation of the Men, in this matter also. They have more Vivacity, more Fire and Penetration, and a greater delicacy and justness of Thought and Expression. In all times those of them who apply'd themselves to Study, learned very thing with an admirable facility. The Famous *Sapho*, who by her Learning merited the name of the *Tenth Muse*, was Author of such Writings as were admired by all Antiquity. There remains only a Hymenean piece which she made to the Honour of *Venus*, and one Ode. But these are sufficient to shew us the value of those incomparable works, and to give us an extream regret for the loss of them. And is it not a clear Demonstration that the Men are convinc'd how much the Women

men would excel in learning, that they have attributed the invention of Arts and Sciences to nine Women whom they have celebrated under the name of *Muses*, and who were famous for their knowledge in History, and Musick, and Poetry and a thousand other Curiosities. Altars have been raised to *Minerva*, as the Goddess of Wisdom and knowledge ; And *Pallas* renown'd both for War and Learning.

But not to go back into the distant Ages of Antiquity, and without having recourse to Fables or Uncertainty, we may find a great Number of Modern Women, as famous for their Wit and Learning, as for their Beauty. *Mary Queen of Scotland* is illustrious for the Charms of her Conversation and her Letters, as well as the Beauty of her Face and Person ; and for her admirable Wit and Knowledge, as well as her Patience and greatness of Mind in Suffering. *Marguerite de Valois*, Sister to *Francis the 1st*, was call'd by the *Beaux Esprits* of that time the *Tenth Muse*, as *Sapho* had been of old. And the late Queen of *Sweden* has got an Immortal Reputation for Learning, and the esteem she had for Learned Men, whom she Honour'd

honour'd and, rewarded. This Great Princess knew every thing : Nothing escap'd her ; History, Philosophy, Mathematicks. She spoke all sorts of Languages with great facility. She deci-
ded of all the Works of the Learned, with an Erudition that Surprized the greatest Masters. In short, she was no less remarkable for all sorts of Learning, than she was for her Courage and Great-
ness of Mind in renouncing her King-
dom, from a Contempt of the World.

An Infinity of other examples may be cited, of Women of all Ranks, who have excell'd in Sciences ; so that Experience as well as Reason makes it Evident that Women are capable of every thing that's Great in Government, that's most perfect or refined in the matter of Knowledge and Learning, and that's most exact and delicate in Eloquence or any other Art whatsoever. Wherever they do exert their Natural Talents, or give their Application, they distinguish them-
selves and outshine the Men ; and they would do it in every thing, if their Education were as good ; and if we did not stifle the force and light of their Mind either by too much domestick Care, or by trifling Amusements which keep them

in Idleness, and rob them of a true Taste
of more essential improvements. We
may therefore Conclude, that if we
would do them justice and judge of
them without prejudice, the Women are
still at least as good as the Men, in every
thing and not inferiour to them in any
Respect. I am,

Madam.

Your most Humble and
most Obedient Servant

The Fifth

LETTER

BY A

Lady of the Court of *France*,
 to Monsieur *L' Abbé de Bellegarde*:

SIR,

YOU know the great Love I have
 for Plays, and Comedy. You have
 often reproach'd me with it. But your
 Remonstrances have been to little pur-
 pose. You have not Cur'd me. Very
 few Plays or Occasions escape me. But
 Pray, what would you have me do, from
 Morning to Night? I cannot amuse my
 self as I see other Women do, with
 Knitting or Embroidery. I have no com-
 mercial with Lovers, nor their Letters.
 Gaming is my Aversion: The very sight
 of Cards gives me the Vapours. In this
 want of what to do, the Reading of
 good Books is sometimes a great Re-
 source to me; But one cannot read al-

ways. I find, that of all my Amusements Plays are the most Agreeable. But tho' I have been frequenting the Theatre pretty regularly for Fifteen years part, yet I'm as Ignorant of the true Nature of Plays, as the very first day. And I was strangely out of Countenance, in a Conversation not long ago, where they ask'd me the difference between Comedy and Tragedy. I had very little to say to this great Difficulty. Pray Sir, explain this matter to me, that I may repair my Honour, and satisfy my Vanity, which was dangerously Wounded. Tell me the Rules that ought to be observed for making a good Comedy ; for I reckon you're an Artist, and understand Greek in that Point. And since you have had the Patience to read over all *Master Homer*, Eight times, in his own Mother Tongue ; to be sure you have also read the Greek Tragedies. I know a Man who says that all that our Moderns have made, are but Whip-cream in respect of the Ancients. His opinion, I think, is a little to be suspected, for he's all over-grown with Greek from Head to Foot. I confess, Sir, it vexes me that I cannot read such fine things in their own natural Dress ; but I am like

like *Henriette*. Tell me therefore all I ought to know, not only as to the making a good Play, but also as to Judging right of it, and that I may satisfy my self, in Reason if the Pleasure I take in Plays is well grounded and if it is fit for me to Laugh, when I do Laugh. You see how far my Nicety goes. I'm like them who are not contented to find a fawce Good, but they must know what it is made of, and what Spiceries enter into the Composition. Perhaps the best way for me, were to do just as I have done hitherto, and to follow my Inclination. However, I believe your Reflections will do me no harm. But when you have told me all this, there is yet an essential point in which I would be Instructed fully: My strong Attachement to Plays is made a Scruple of Conscience to me. For my part I have no ill design. I am a plain Dealer. I go very often because I have nothing else to do, and sometimes for the sake of the Company. Do you believe there's any harm in it ? Pray tell me your Opinion ; for tho' you have told me already, that you are no Doctor ; yet I'll have a great regard for your Decision. And I must tell you that my Maxims of Christianity

are more Strict and Austere, than that I would put my Salvation in hazard, or do a thing that were really ill. But at the same time, I would not create Scruples to my self to no purpose; nor Chican my self out of Innocent Pleasures. Pray put my Mind to rest, as to this Matter, and believe that I Honor you very intirely. I am,

Sir,

Your most humble Servant.

Mon-

SIR

Monsieur L'Abbé de Bellegarde's

ANSWER

TO THE

FIFTH LETTER,

*Reflections on Plays, and the
Stage, &c.*

Madam,

IF you had Commanded me to write to you on other Subjects, which have a more immediate Relation to my Character and Condition, I might obey you perhaps with more Success. Or if you left me the Liberty of making my own Plan my self, and choosing Subjects proportioned to my Knowledge and Genius, I might go about it with less Constraint, and say things to you with more Reason and Judgment. But, I am not ashame'd to own to you, Madam, that

I am no Poet ; and that for fifteen years I have not seen the Stage, nor been at a Play. I shall not say whether it is that I'm grown more Scrupulous, or that I have less Pleasure in those Representations. But in short, as I am an ill Poet, I'm but a very ordinary Historian, and therefore I very much doubt of my acquitting my self with Credit, or to your Satisfaction, in what you desire.

In the mean time, it is true, Madam, that formerly I Read the most part of those Books that treat of the Rules that ought to be observed in Comedies and Tragedies ; I enquired into what both the Ancients and Moderns had said on this Subject ; I considered the Critical Remarks that have been made on many Plays ; that I might have some Idea of the Perfection that those Pieces ought to have. I believe, Madam, it would not be amiss that you read some of those Authors, since you desire to have Reasons to satisfy your self why you Laugh or Cry at those Representations. If you please, Madam, I shall tell you the Books that I read, that if you think fit to satisfy your Curiosity in this matter, you may see things in their Source and Original.

Aristotle was the first that gave Rules for

for the Stage. His Rules have been considered in all Ages as a Model for writing well on this Subject. What is founded on Nature and good Sense lasts for ever. *Horace's Art of Poetry* is Master-piece : And tho' he wrote in Verse, yet it is easy to discern and distinguish the Precepts. With the help of these two Books rightly understood, one knows all that's necessary as to those Productions for the Theatre ; both for forming the Taste and for making the just and critical Reflections. And this is the very thing you desire, Madam.

Amongst the Moderns I have a great esteem for *Vida*, a *Cremonois*, who was a good Poet, and Bishop of *Alba*. These two qualities seem pretty unsuitable, but they are not Inconsistent. He wrote three Books in Verse, on the Art of Poetry, in Imitation of *Horace*. The Book which *Castelvetro* wrote on this Subject, is admirable, and it would be yet more, if he did not discover so much Affectation in refuting sometimes the Sentiments of *Aristotle* and for the most part very little to the purpose. *Ronsard*, *du Bellay*, and *Pelletier*, who began to have some Ideas of the Art of Poetry, wrote some things on the Rules of it. But tho' their Poems were esteem'd in their own time,

at present we can only pity them. *Daniel Heinsius* has writ a very fine Treatise on the Art of Poetry, wherein he gives Rules for a good Tragedy, according to the Method of *Aristotle*. The Critical Remarks which the Famous *Monsieur de Corneille* has made on his own Pieces, will instruct you more, Madam, and form your Taste better, than all other Books whatsoever. But by all means read also the Art of Poetry writ by the Illustrious *Monsieur Boileau Despraux*. He follows *Horace's* Taste; and the Modern equals if not surpasses the Ancient. Those that are not of this Opinion, it is not so much from respect to the *Roman*, as from Partiality and Emulation against the French man, whose transcendent Reputation offends them.

These are the books, Madam, which I have read some time ago upon this Subject. But these thoughts are much out of my Mind, because, since that time, I have been employ'd about things which have no Relation to those matters. But if the Solitude and Quiet I enjoy in the Country can recal some of my Ancient Ideas, I shall write you at a Venture what comes into my Mind, as I do in my other Letters, without any Me-

Methodical Order, or making you any Apology for giving you so lame and imperfect a Satisfaction to your demands.

The Theatre, which was Buried in the Ruins of *Athens* and *Rome*, is rais'd again in our Age with a great deal of Splendour. If the same Rewards were given to the Poets of our time as the Greeks and Romans gave, in their days, to those who excell'd in this kind of writing, we should undoubtedly have a greater number of Eminent Poets. But the Immense Labour in Composition is but ordinarily Rewarded; Nor does it raise Men, as formerly it did, to the highest Honours and the first Dignities of the State.

If other Women were as sincere as you are, Madam, they would own as freely that they know but very little of what's properly Signify'd by these Terms of *Tragedy* and *Comedy*. They are the two kinds of *Dramatick Poesie*. Perhaps this word is as great a Mystery to a-bundance of Women. It is call'd *Dramatick*, because it represents the Actions of some Persons: And in this it is different from a simple Recital. *Tragedy* has its origin from two Greek words, where-

where of the one signifies a *Goat*, and the other a *Song*, because in the mean and rude Infancy of those Verses, the Poet had a Goat for his Reward, from the common People, whom he had diverted. And *Comedy* is also a Composition of two Greek words ; the one signifies a *Village*; and the other, a *Song*. For the Makers of those *Comedies* went up and down the Country, reciting their Verses : In those unpolish'd times the Comedians used to bedaub their Faces with Mudd, or some such thing. The Poet *Aeschylus* was the first that invented the Mask, which is a cleaner way and more Convenient. Tho' this sort of Poesie continued a long time very Rude, and without Art, or Rules, or Form, yet the Greeks were mightily delighted with it; for being a People very fond of their Notion of Liberty, they heard with great Satisfaction, the Bloody Satyrs which were made Publickly in those Verses on the Stage, against the Principal Persons of the Government. And the Common People being admitted both into the Amphitheatre and the Senate, took a free Liberty of Judging of the Wit and Merit both of their Poets, and of their Lawyers and Ora-tors.

Tragedy, properly speaking, is a Serious Representation of some Great Action, which naturally produces Pity or Terror in the Spectators. And therefore those Pieces, where the Result and the Event is fortunate, are but improperly call'd Tragedies. The Principal design of Tragedy is to instruct, by raising and amusing our Passions. For this end the Poet ought to choose some fine piece of History, which is either really true, or is believed to be so. He must observe all the Decencies, as to the Manners and Characters of the Persons he Introduces. And he ought to choose the Noblest and most proper terms, to express their Sentiments, suitable to the Greatness of his Subject.

Terror in Tragedy is what arises from that Chain of Contrary Incidents, which follow one after another, against all expectation. *Oedipus* comes to know the death of *Polybius* King of Corinth, who's Son he thought he was. His grief for his death is attended with a sensible joy to see the Oracle fail, which had foretold that he should murther his Father. But presently he discovers that he was not the Son of *Polybius*; and this unexpected News opens open

the Secret of his Destiny. He is the Son of *Laius*, whom he had kill'd and of *Jocasta*, whom he had Married.

A Tragedy is divided into five Acts; and every Act into Scenes, the number of which is not fixt. One Act is one considerable part of the Action, which however it seems Interrupted on the Theatre, yet is supposed to be continu'd behind the Stage, where some of the most essential parts of the Action pass. A Scene begins at the coming in or going out of the several Actors, who ought never either to come in or go out but upon necessary and proper Occasions.

The *Manners* are the Inclinations and Qualities of the Actors, whether good or bad, which form their Character. Thus in the Tragedy of *Iphigenia*, all that can represent a Man in Love, but violent as *Achilles* was; all that can paint a Magnanimous and Ambitious Prince such as *Agamemnon*; A very tender Mother, and a Courageous young Princess, as were *Clitemnestra* and *Iphigenia*; All this, is what we call the Manners of the Persons. And they must be so lively express'd, that the spectator must be in a great measure prepossess'd and prepared as to the part of every Actor. They ought

ought neither to transgress the Rules of those decencies which are proper to certain ages and conditions, nor alter the known Characters of the persons, as these are fix'd and consecrated either by real History or Fable. *Achilles* must be passionate, and high, and vehement, and inflexible. In short, they must be equal, and without inconsistencies. Thus to the very end, the remembrance of *Hector*, is dear to *Andromache*.

In Tragedy there must be unity of Time and Place, and Action. The perfection of this sort of Poem requires that the Action last no longer than the real matter of Fact is supposed to have lasted. But the time may be hastened and precipitated in the intervals, or as to that part of the Action which passes behind the Stage. Twelve hours is the most competent and natural Time, tho' sometimes it is lengthen'd to twenty four; but that is the utmost, according to the Laws of Decency.

The Action ought to be One; and all the Incidents and Episodes, which compose it, ought to have such a connection; and consequently all the persons ought to be so Necessary, that you cannot take away the least part without

out destroying the whole. There is a fault, visible to all the World, in Monsieur Corneille's *Horaces*. The fifth Act may be intirely cut off, without destroying the Principal Action. It makes an Action a part, and of it self, which might be the Subject of another Tragedy. now this duplicity is always a great Imperfection.

Whatever is added to the Principal Action, to make it more Lively and Illustrious, is call'd *Episode*. When the Subject is chosen, which ought to be some shining piece of History or Fable, the Author takes care to bring in also the other Remarkable things performed by the Persons he introduces, that thereby he may raise their Characters.

The third Unity is that of *Place*, which ought still to be fixt and unalterable, so that notwithstanding all the different motions, and the several goings and comings of the Actors, they must always be supposed to appear again naturally in the very same place.

Revolution, or the *Peripatia*, is the change of Fortune, or passing from one State to another, contrary to Expectation. From these extraordinary Changes arises that Fear, and Terror in the Spectators.

And

And the more surprizing and unexpected the Changes of Fortune are, they are the finer, and produce the stronger Passions.

Discovery, or *Agnition*, is that part of the Change, when the Principal Persons come to know one another, who they really are; which produces a new Love or Hatred, and they become more happy or unfortunate. Nothing is finer in a Tragedy, than this sort of Discovery handsomly managed, and when it is unexpected and surprizing, till at last it Unridles the whole *Plot* and design of the Tragedy. It makes the strongest Impression, when the Persons are just going to do some considerable thing, not knowing who they are; and in that very Nick of time, the Discovery is made. The next to that, is, when they have Acted without knowing, and then immediately the Discovery is made: For this too is very surprizing, and cannot fail to excite various Passions.

The *Sentiments*, are all those Maxims, and Expressions, those lively and shining strokes, in the Conversation and Discourse of the Principal Persons, which give life and beauty to the Action, raise the Characters of the Persons, and ex-

cite the severals Passions of the Spectators.

Situation is that Violent State in which One of the Principal Persons is strangely Embarass'd between two contrary and pressing Interests and Passions, which rear him to Pieces, and he cannot without infinite Pain determine which of them to follow. Such is the Moment of Pain and Torment, when *Rodrigue* is Distracted between Love and Honor, and between his Father and his Mistress. And such is that, when *Galerius* being told by *Gabinia*, upon what Conditions he must expect to Marry her, finds himself so violently Embarass'd between Her and the Gods of his own Religion.

The Plot of a Tragedy comprehends all the Designs of the Principal Persons, and all the Obstacles, natural or foreign, which traverse them. It goes on unridled to the end of the fourth Act generally, but sometimes lasts till the last Scene of the fifth; which is an extreme Beauty in the Piece, for it gives a greater Life, and raises still the Concern of the Spectators, by keeping them in suspense as to the event till the very Last.

When

When all doubts are clear'd, and all Obstacles cease, and in short when the Fate of the Principal Persons is seen, that is what we call *The Event or Catastrophe*; the Fortunate or Funest Result of the Tragedy, and that is the moment of the Unridling or opening the Plot and Design of the whole Piece. It ought to arise naturally from the Body of the real History or Fable; but it cannot be prepar'd with too much Art, nor be too short, or too plain and simple. The *Funest Catastrophes* seem to have more Dignity in them than the Fortunate, if I may dare to say so. Sure they make the strongest Impressions.

Those who pretend that no Blood must be spilt on the Theatre, do not well consider what that means. No Actor is to spill the Blood of another; that indeed is contrary to all Rules of Decency; but when an ancient high spirited *Roman* is represented, he may kill himself on the Theatre, because this noble Despair and Resolution was considered amongst them as a Glorious and Sacred Action. Things may be ventured on the Stage that are contrary to our Laws and Customs; and such Subjects will have Success, if they are right-

ly managed. The Love of *Phædra* for *Hippolytus*, and of *Tiridates* for his Sister *Eriuice*, took extreamly, for that very reason.

In short, an Author must always Manage his Subject with Art; he must make haste to bring his Persons into Action; bring Extraordinary and Surprizing events, which seem to destroy, and yet produce one another; he must always make strong impressions on the Spectators, and beget a perpetual Concern in them, by keeping them in suspence, and handsomly deceiving them till the very last: All the Characters must be rais'd and preserv'd with Dignity: There must be no forc'd Images, nor unnatural straining for Wit out of Season; the Turns and Changes must be Conspicuous and Shining. The Scenes must be lively and short, and handsomly managed. There must be much Fire and Motion; little Recital; but a perpetual Action, which still goes on vehemently to the End.

The *Fable*, or the framing the Subject, is the first and Essential point. We call it Fable, because the Author is free to choose his own Subjects for the Stage, and to change the Circumstances from what

they

they are in the History, that he may fit and adjust them for the Theatre.

The Adventures of Mean and Miserable Persons can give very little concern to Spectators; and therefore the Subject of a Tragedy must be the Action and Fortune of some Considerable person. For then the Impressions and the Passions that are raised are the stronger. If the Virtue of the *Hero* is not very Great, the Spectators are but little concern'd at his Misfortunes. It is afflict'd Virtue that excites that Tender Pity which is the Principal Life of Tragedy. But if he falls into Disgrace by his own ill Actions or Imprudence, his misfortunes raise our Indignation or Contempt. But tho' the Punishment of an ill Man be very Just, and ought to be remarkably brought about in the Tragedy, yet it raises rather the Passion of Revenge than any noble Sentiments in the Spectators. And therefore the Hero of a Tragedy ought never to be a Scelerate. The Greeks, who lov'd to see a Bloody Stage, frequently Represented very vicious Men or such as had committed great Crimes. *Oedipus*, *Orestes*, *Alcmeon*, *Medea*, *Thyestes*, were all of this Character. And so the Specta-

tor was always in Fright and Terror. But *Pity* is incomparably the more tender Passion and more agreeable to Humanity. Therefore a *Hero* ought not to be guilty of any enormous Crime. If *Phædra* excited the pity of our Spectators, it was because Monsieur Racine, of a Superior Genius, and Master of his Subject, did so artfully manage the weakness of that Queen, that he made all the Blame fall upon her Confidant, who abused the Trust her Mistress had in her.

It is not necessary that a *Hero* be absolutely perfect in all things; for that is impossible; and not suitable to Mankind. He ought to have Imperfections, that the Spectator may be afraid'd lest some misfortune should happen to him, and may in some measure put himself in his place; which one never does, if the *Hero* seems absolutely perfect and above mankind. Yet the *Poet* must never make his Imperfections the cause of his Disgrace. Misfortunes must always be represented as the Consequence of some ill Action he has Committed. But then this Action must never be the Effect of a wicked Design, or a Soul truly Vicious. It must proceed from some Accident, some sudden

den and inconsiderate Passion, or some Frailty that is not inconsistent with a great Virtue. Thus the unjust Jealousy of *Theseus*, the Infidelity of *Jason*, the Presumption of *Niobe*, tho' they are justly punished, yet these punishments excite our Pity, because all these persons had other excellent Qualities and Virtues which create our affection for them. But if the Poet will bring a Hero that's absolutely Vicious, the Punishment of his Vices must be such as to make the strongest Impressions of Horror, and to fright and terrify the Spectators.

Since the design of Tragedy is Instruction, the General Rule is, that Virtue ought to be Rewarded and Vice punished. The Moderns are much more Circumspect in this than the Ancients. *Euripides* in his *Medea*, after representing her Cruelty, and the perfidy of *Jason*, leaves them on their good Behaviour for the future, without troubling his head about their Punishment. Parricide, and Incest, ought to be attended with Punishment suitable to the blackness of such crimes. But the Misfortunes of persons less guilty, make a more tender Impression, and bring even tears of Compassion, which is a sensible pleasure.

ture. To raise this Pity in the Spectator, the Author ought to represent with great art the Adventures of his Hero, and that the Infidelity of those who had the strictest Tyes of Blood, or Love or Friendship with him, were the Causes of his falling into Misfortune : It being an ordinary thing to see one endeavour to be Reveng'd, when he has met with signal Injuries ; and this Spirit of Revenge having been considered as a Generosity and Virtue by many of the Ancients, one is nor surprised to see their Heroes provok'd to it by Injuries and Infidelity.

Tho' the Poet has a Liberty to change some Circumstances of his History, to suppress some, and to add others, yet he must not change the essential Points or the Principal Events, which all the world knows. An Author would be very Ridiculous, to represent Pompey boasting that he had beat *Cæsar* at the Battle of *Pharsalia*; Or to bring *Cæsar* on the Stage dying Peaceably in his own Palace, in the Arms of his Wife, when every body knows he was stabb'd in the Senate. But there is no Necessity for an Author to say that *Cæsar* cover'd his head with his Robes, or that he reproach'd *Brutus* in the very words which the History relate

lates. These Circumstances, not being essential, may be past in silence, or altered by the Poet, as he shall Judge most proper or necessary for the Theater.

We do not Love to see a bloody Stage, and in this we shew more humanity than the Ancients did, who Massacred their Heroes on the Publick Theatre. These are odious Spectacles, and liker the Butcheries of Gladiators than the quarrels of Heroes. *Euripides* is justly blam'd for representing *Medea* cutting the Throats of her own proper Children. There must be a Barbarity in one's Nature to be able to bear such a horrible sight. The Cruelty of *Ulysses* against *Astyanax*; *Pyrrhus*'s Massacreing the Children of *Priamus*; the Parricides of *Atreus* and *Tantalus*, are Actions so full of Horror, that our Theatre cannot allow them, tho' they pleas'd the Taste of the Ancients, who could look on, and see *Orestes* Stabbing his own Mother on the Stage, and admire *Sophocles* and *Æschylus* for such lively Representations. Whatever *Clitemnestra* had done, yet no reason can be given to Authorize a Son's Embrewing his hands in the Blood of his own Mother.

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In the mean time, however Odious such Actions are, they cannot be altered in their principal Circumstances, because these are notoriously known to all the World ; But they must be Acted behind the Theatre, and the Spectator is to be told them by recital. In this the Poet shews his Genius, and the life and force of his Expressions, when he can do by Recital the same effects, as to the necessary Passions, as the real fight would do. The account which *Theramene* gives of the Death of her Master, in the *Phædra* of Monsieur Racine, is as touching and Pathetick, as if the Spectator should see, with his own eyes, *Hippolytus* dragg'd by his horses, or *Aricia* in that lamentable posture, by the body of her Lover, who was expiring, and so disfigured that scarcely could she know him. A Spectator who has a true Taste will thank the Poet for sparing him the sight of the Blood and Butcheries of his Heroes expiring on the Theatre. But an Author who is diffident of his own Genius and afraid he cannot sufficiently support the force of the Narration, brings his wounded and bloody Carcasses to produce those effects in the Spectators, which he himself cannot. Like certain Advocates, who wanting Art and Genious

to excite the Compassion of the Judges, brought pictures of the Misfortunes and Calamities of their Clients, that by those dumb Representations they might obtain, what they were not able to raise, by the Force of their Reasons and their Eloquence.

That any Funest event may have its whole effect on the Mind of the Spectator, the Poet must in the first parts of the Tragedy, fill our thoughts with great hopes, and a certain Joy for the Prosperity of the Hero. A Reverse of Fortune, which all of a sudden, makes him fall into disgrace, excites the greatest Emotion in the Spectator, by the quick and unexpected return of the contrary Passions. Especially if the Author have the address to make the very Persons who were like to be the great Instruments of his Prosperity to be now the Causes of his Misfortunes. This Surprises extremely, and makes one of the Chiefest Beauties of Tragedy.

It is no Paradox that a Poet ought to have more regard to the Appearance of Truth, than to Truth it self. It is an Incontestable Maxim. A Fiction that has the Air of Probability, and which does not Shock our Reason, is preferable to an Incredible Truth. This Probability

bability is founded on those Qualities which are Incident to men of such an Age, or Humour, or Condition, in short to a Man of that Character. An old man must be represented peevish, and ill Humour'd and Jealous, praising the past times, censuring whatever others do, Covetous, and afraid to starve, tho' he abounds in Riches. A Woman that's passionately in Love, esteems nothing but what has some relation to her Passion and favours it, despises Reputation, laughs at all Advice, sacrifices both her Honour and her Fortune to please the Object of her Affection. A man that's Barbarous and Bloody, has a pleasure in cruel Spectacles : The Complaints and Cries, and Groans of the Miserable cannot soften him. He has no sense of the ills he makes others suffer, and he feels in himself a Barbarous Joy at the Miseries and Misfortunes of others.

A man of such a Country, or such an Education, has certain Qualities that are commonly supposed to enter into his Character. *Brutus* wanted not affection for his Sons, yet he condemn'd them to death because they design'd to restore the *Tarquins*. His notion of Zeal for his Country got the better of his Love

Love to his own Children. The Sentiments of an *Asiatick*, bred to softness, are very unlike those of an Ancient *Roman*, harden'd to Fatigue, and accustom'd to Frugality. A change of Fortune too is supposed for the most part to change our Manners and alter our Sentiments and Humors. Those who are raised from a mean and obscure Condition, grow generally Proud and Insolent, and do all the hurt they can to Persons of Birth and Quality.

Nothing keeps up the Attention and Emotion of the Spectator more than the Connexion of the Events one with another, so that still what goes before seem naturally to produce that which follows. This Continued chain of Actions and Passions keeps the Mind still in Expectation, and makes it enter into all the Sentiments and part of the Actor. *Monsieur Racine* has admirably observ'd this Rule in his *Phædra*: This Princess conceives a violent Passion for *Hippolytus*, the Son of *Theseus* her Husband. After many Combats within her self, at last she takes the Resolution to discover this Criminal Flame to him. That young Prince, full of Virtue, is so far from answering her Incestuous Passion, that he's Astonish-

Astonished at so unexpectd a Declaration. *Phædra's Love* changes into Fury; and for Fear of being prevented, she makes hast to accuse *Hippolytus*: and resolves to destroy him by a horrid Calumny. At last she abandons herself to Despair, and with her own hand gives herself the Punishment she had more than Merited. All those Incidents follow one another; with a wonderful Chain and Connexion.

The Poet ought to be very carefull to reserve the most Tragical part to the End of the piece, to excite the strongest Passions in the Spectators. If at the end of the Tragedy he brings in two great Actions, the mind of the hearer being divided remains uncertain, and knows not where to fix, or which is the principal Event that deserves its chief Sentiments and Emotion. This is a fault which the Criticks object against *Euripides* in his *Hecuba*. The sad complaints which that unfortunate Mother makes, when she finds the Body of her Son *Polydorus* whom the Perfidious King of *Thracia* had put to death, move all the World with Compassion. And the Poet ought to have contented himself with that. But he presently changes the Scene,

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and represents her drunk with Revenge, and with her own hands tearing out the Eyes of her Son's Murtherer. Tho' that barbarous King deserv'd this cruel treatment, yet that strange Spectacle diminishes the Grief which *Hecuba*'s Misfortunes had rais'd in the Hearers.

A Tragedy ought to contain one Principal Action, accompanied with several Incidents and Episodes, which have a relation to it. As all the parts of a House ought to be proportion'd to one another, to make a perfect Building. But these Additions and Episodes ought to have so natural a Connexion with the Principal Action, that the omitting them, would diminish and alter the Beauty and Oeconomy of the whole Subject. I own, I think Episodes generally shew only the barrenness of the Poet's Genius, which has not Force enough to continue one Thing to the End, without borrowing such foreign Incidents to fill up the Voids of his scanty Scenes. But I do not universally condemn them. Yea, sometimes they are absolutely necessary to give Life and Brightness to the Principal Action, and to carry it on to the last unridling of the whole design of the Peice. As in the Tragedy of *Bajazet*,

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the Love of the Vizier *Achmet* and *Atalide* the Confidant of *Roxana*, serves extremely to carry on the Intrigue, and is a great ornament to the Representation.

Some Subjects of Tragedies are so plain and simple that the Hero is always Fortunate or always Unfortunate from the beginning to the very End of the Piece. The *Greeks* lov'd plain blunt Crying and Lamenting, and so they were glad to see Unfortunate Persons brought upon the Stage, that they might shew their Compassion by the Tears they openly shed for them. But Taste is much refined, and these uniform Subjects now are but dull and languishing. The Mind finding it self still in the same Situation suffers a Constraint which Pains it. One grows weary of Weeping always, and leaves the Unfortunate Man to his ill Destiny. The Poet therefore ought to choose a Subject where there is a Mixture of good and ill Fortune, and where the Hero fancying himself at the utmost height of his Desires and Prosperity, falls headlong all of a Sudden into an Abyss of Misfortune. Or where having been a long time Persecuted, and at the point of sinking under his Sufferings, he sees an

an unexpected End of all his Misfortunes, in a Glorious and Surprizing Return of Prosperity. This is what gives the Spectator those strong and agreeable Emotions ; and a Multitude of different Passions are moved by those sudden Changes of the Face of Affairs. When the Poet places the Agnitions and Discoveries with Art, and brings them in the Nick, they make one of the Greatest Ornaments and Pleasures of Tragedy. The Spectator is overjoy'd to see the Mysterious and Embarrassing Veil removed, that hid the Truth, and kept him in darkness.

The Design of all Dramatick Pieces is to excite Various Passions in the Mind, in their turns, and thereby to lead us to Virtue and deter us from Vice. Grief and Joy, and Hope, and Fear, and Compassion, and Horror, and Despair, All these Passions enter by the Eyes and by the Ears, according to the Nature of the Subject and the Force of the Representation. The Character of Dramatick Poets is very different from that of those Advocates who pleaded before the *Areopagit* Judges. They were expressly forbid to use any Figure or Image that could excite the least Passion in the Minds

of these Senators. They durst only relate matter of Fact, with some very short and plain Reasons to justify that. The Business of a Poet is quite another thing. He is to make use of all his Art, and to set all his Wit to work, to raise a Commotion in the Minds of the Spectator. The Quality of the Persons that suffer, their Virtues, their Sex, their Age, the Nature of their Sufferings and the Persons by whom they are Persecuted, all these and many other Circumstances contribute extremely to excite our Passions. Euripides has admirably managed these Circumstances in the Tragedy of *Hecuba*. He makes that Unfortunate Queen speak to Ulysses, upon the loss of her Kingdom, and her Husband, and Children, and on the Iminent danger of her Daughter *Polyxene*, in so Pathetick and deplorable a manner, that no Man who has a Soul in him can refuse his Tears and Compassion to the Misfortunes of the Mother and the Daughter. *Polyxene* was the Daughter of one of the greatest Kings of that time, who had lost his Kingdom, after a War of ten Years. This Princess was then but sixteen Years of Age, and one of the most Beautiful Persons of all Asia.

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There was a design to Sacrifice her to the *Manes* of *Achilles*, who had passionately Lov'd her, and resolved to Marry her, notwithstanding all the Cabals of the Grecians to hinder it. And what encreas'd the Grief and Misfortune of *Polyxene* was that *Pyrrhus*, the very Son of *Achilles*, was the Person that demanded this Barbarous Sacrifice, and with his own hand at last Stabb'd her, in the sight of the Army and all the Grecian Princes.

If Heroes complain of their Misfortunes, yet nothing ought to escape them that's unworthy of their Rank and Character. Tho' their Expressions may be proper to the greatness of their Sufferings, yet nothing must appear in their Sentiments that's Low or Creeping. They must never shew Grief but upon some great Misfortune, such as is capable to shake the Most Intrepid Soul and Resolution. The two greatest Geniuses of Antiquity have fail'd in this Point. I mean both *Homer* and *Virgil*. The first represents *Achilles* filling the Air with his terrible Cries, and in Despair, not for the death of his Friend *Patroclus*, for that might be excusable, but because the Flies fix'd on his body, and suck'd the Blood of

his Wounds. The *Pious Aeneas* in the *Aeneid* cries and laments upon all occasions and the most inconsiderable dangers. Such continual Allarms and so mean Sentiments agree very ill with the greatness of a Hero, whom the Gods had design'd to be the Founder of the Roman Empire.

A great knowledge and understanding of the Manners and Passions of Mankind is very necessary for whoever would undertake to write a Tragedy with any Success. The Manners and Maxims and Sentiments of Men are the Springs and Fountains of their actions, and the Causes of their Prosperities or Misfortunes. I do not mean that a Man's Misfortune proceeds always from his own Wickedness or Imprudence but still it is either from his own, or that of others. And tho' we see many Instances of Persons of great Virtue Subject to Misfortunes, as we see many Scelerates enjoy the greatest Sun-shine of present Prosperity yet since the End of Tragedy is Instruction the Poet ought to take Care, not to represent Virtue always under Oppression nor Vice always Unpunished and Triumphant. There is a Secret Spight and Indignation in the Spectators when they

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see Vice recompense¹, and Virtue unfortunate. And one cannot consider that the Adulteries and Parricides of *Egistus* and *Clitemnestra* go unpunished, and that they possess the Crown which their Crimes invaded, without an Indignation at their Prosperity.

To Judge right of *Manners*, an Author must know justly what belongs to every Age, and every Sex, and to every State and Condition and Quality. Upon this Foot, the Author is not to represent, without great necessity, a Valiant Woman, doing the Actions of a Hero; nor a Learned Woman, dogmatizing amongst the Doctors; nor a Vallet instructed in mysteries of State, giving refined Lectures of Politicks. For tho' these things may happen, v t such examples shock the ordinary Rules of Probability.

If the Poet draws the Picture of a Tyrant, it is not necessary to give him all sorts of Vices, but there must be Imperfections even in his best Qualities. His Courage must be Cruel and Savage. His Prudence, Cunning and Artificial. His Humanity and Complaisance must be full of Perfidy. What he gives Liberally to some, must be Rob'd unjustly

from others. He must be Mistrustful, a Knave, and Unfaithful ; an Enemy to Persons of Merit, whose Virtues he considers as a continual Reproach to his own Vices.

The Character of a Hero is to be a Man of Generous and true Courage, and Intrepidity. A Philosopher is Prudent and Virtuous and Circumspect. Women ought to be Modest. A Priest to be Devout, and denyed to the World. A Young Man has Heat and Vigour and Activity ; an Old Man Experience. A French Man, an Ancient Roman, a Modern Italian, a Swiss, a Muscovite, a German, an English Man, a Scotch Man, In short, the most part of Countries have some general Characters, and some certain combination of qualities which accompany the Idea we have of them.

When the Character of the Person is once established, it is very absurd to bring any Circumstance to shock and contradict it. A Hero must not be brave upon one occasion, and fearfull upon another. A Philosopher must not be both Prudent, and shatter-brain'd. A Virtuous Woman must never be Coquette. That were to turn them to Ridicule, but not to paint or represent them in Tragedy.

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Example, on the Theater, makes more Impression, and Perswades better than long discourses of Morality. These become fade and insipid, and the Spectator wearies. Yet if a Philosopher, for example, is brought upon the Stage, he may be pardon'd to give some grave and serious Maxims, provided he says them in few words, and not as a Pedant.

If the Disposition of the Subject or the truth of the History allow not the Poet to give Virtue its just recompence, he ought to supply that in some Measure by the Praises which some Considerable Persons of the Tragedy publickly give to those Virtuous Actions which remain Unrewarded. The same Rule ought to be observed for Condemning of Vice, if it remain unpunished and Prosperous. At least, it ought to be Threatned with some Great Misfortune; and Imprecations ought to be made which express a Detestation of it. This *Sophocles* does, in his *Antigone*, where *Tiresias* boldly threatens *Creon* that the Gods will Revenge, upon himself and all the Royal Family, the Death of that Innocent Prince, whom that barbarous King had so inhumanly Massacred.

Let a Man be nee'r so wicked, yet

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still he has some remains of Virtue which make him stop and deliberate a little when he is at the Point of Committing a Crime. The Poet ought to represent this Internal Struggle and Uncertainty, in lively Colours, that thereby he may expose to the Spectators the weakness of those Reasons and the Strength of those Passions which lead to Vice and Immorality. Corrupt Sentiments and Inclinations ought to be describ'd in their proper dress and deformity, lest ill examples should make too strong Impressions on weaker Minds, who are naturally more inclin'd to Vice than to Virtue.

Here, Madam, I have sent you some Observations, which may give you a general Idea of the Perfection of Tragedy, and help you to know such as are according to the Rules of Art. But that you may be fully inform'd, I advise you Madam, to read the Famous *Monsieur de Corneille's Discourse on Dramatick Poesie*, which you have in the first Tome of his Works. He examines this matter to the bottom, according to all the Rules the Ancients have left us, and which he understood as well as they. At least we may say, without Flattering him, that his Dramatick Poems, if they do not surpass, yet they equal the most Elaborate Pieces which have

have been most admired by Antiquity. It must be own'd that the Ancients are Admirable in the Pictures they draw of Characters, and Passions, and the Natural Inclinations of Men. But *Monsieur Corneille* goes further, I may say, than Nature. He searches into the most Artificial disguises, the most Secret Designs, and the darkest Plies and the most Studied Maxims of the depraved Heart of Man, and from thence he exposes the Principles and Motives of our Actions. From the Representations on the Ancient Stage we may see that their Manners were plainly and bluntly Good or Ill, for the Times were Ignorant and Barbarous. But our Manners are more Polish'd and Refined. More of Art, and less of Savage Inhumanity. The Force and Genius of Poetry is the same ; but our Poets have the harder Task, and which requires a greater Penetration.

I have enlarg'd so fully on this Subject of Tragedy, Madam, that I need say very little on the Nature or Rules of Comedy. The true Design of both is the same : To lead men to Virtue, and to deterr them from Vice. Tragedy does it by serious Representations of the Actions and Manners and the Fortunes of Men. But the Nature and Design of

Comedy is to laugh us out of our Follies and Immoralities, and to lead us to Virtue, by turning Vice into Ridicule. The same force of Imagination, the same Poetick Genius, is necessary for Both : The same knowledge of the Heart and Manners of Mankind ; and perhaps a greater for Comedy : At least they are two different Turns of Wit, so that we very rarely find the same Poet equally fit for both these kinds of Composition. The liberty of Fiction and Invention is much greater as to the Fable or Subject of Comedy. But, tho' the Characters ought to be lively they must never be excessive or extravagant ; and the Pictures must always be of such Follies or Vices as really happen amongst Mankind : Otherwise is it an Impertinent Fiction of a Wild Imaginary Nothing, which can be of no use to the Spectators.

There is a greater Liberty of Expression too in Comedy ; But there are certain Bounds and Decencies which are never to be transgress'd. I need not give you a particular detail, Madam, of these Rules and Limits. A Virtue such as yours, Madam, is the properest Judge ; and I shall only say, that, whatsoever would offend it in Conversation, will offend

offend it on the Stage ; And that the Poet who encroaches either upon Modesty or Religion, shews not only his Brutal Immorality, but also his Ignorance of his own Art, and the Rules of Poetry.

What I had further to say, Madam, on the Ancient and Modern Comedies, and the several Writers on this Subject, I must adjourn to another Occasion, that I may hasten to say something at present to the Question you ask me, *If it is Allowable and Decent for a Woman of Quality to go to Plays?* I shall not take upon me to decide in this matter, but I shall fairly give you the reasons that are brought on both sides. You may judge of them your self, and follow the advice of your Director. It has been a subject of Dispute, of a long time, amongst persons of the greatest Merit, who have omitted nothing for the defence of their own opinion, and to give the greater Air of Probability to their Respective Sentiments.

Those who stand up for the Lawfulness of Plays say that we ought to consider them in the same manner as we do all other sorts of Amusement or Diversion. A Moderate Use of them is very allowable, and has nothing of ill in it.

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The force and vigour of our Minds as well as of our Bodies is limited. We cannot always apply our selves to serious things, nor to any one thing whatsoever. We stand in need of Changes and Recreations, that we may resume our Labour with greater Vivacity, and consequently with greater advantage. Now the most Austere and Rigid Casuists do not absolutely forbid the use of Recreations. It is the abuse only that's Unlawfull: And therefore if one go to Plays with the necessary Precautions, and do not consume too much Time in that sort of Divertisement, Why is it not as Lawfull and Innocent as any other? It is upon this foot, and on the Supposition that the Plays we go to see have nothing in them that's Scandalous or Immoral, that some modern Divines have maintain'd the Lawfulness of the Stage, and the seeing of Plays. It is not therefore Comedy it self or in its own nature that ought to be condemn'd, but the Excess and the Abuse of it. It is true the Fathers of the Church have Declaimed most terribly against Comedy in general, and in many places of their Works we find bloody Satyrs against those loose Christians who frequented those

those Spectacles. But it is answer'd that the Fathers undoubtedly mean the Comedies of their times, which ought not to be compared to what we see at present on our Theatre. Those were scandalous representations of Lewd and Indecent postures; and of all Sorts of Ordure and Impudicity. And therefore it is no wonder the Fathers abhorr'd the very name, and could not mention them without a sacred Indignation. But our Comedies at present are clean from all those Indelicacies. Nothing to encroach on good manners, or to offend the strictest Virtue. Instead of promoting or enflaming, they have often serv'd to the reformation of Vice and Folly. An air of Affectation and Pedantry was a general Infection amongst us, here in *France*, for some time, and especially amongst the Ladies. It was a Jargon that was not to be Understood, and seem'd to be a Burlesque both on Sense and Nature. All the serious Reasons that were us'd against it were thrown away to no purpose. But *Moliere's Comedy, Les Précieuses Ridicules*, brought People back from this Ridiculous folly, to the Natural way of Sense and Expression. His *Tartuffe*, exposed
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the Impostures of False Devotion, and reveal'd the Mysteries of Hypocrites, who abuse Religion for a Cloak to their Vices, and varnish over, with that pretext, the most execrable Deceits and Impieties. And Experience has prov'd that several other of his Representations have shew'd both the Virtuous Designs and the great Effect of his Admirable Compositions.

If the Fathers of the Church had known our Theatre, as it is purify'd and Reform'd at present, perhaps they would have approv'd and allow'd it: At least they would have spoke of it with more Moderation ; and not attack'd it with so Bloody Invectives, or forbid it under so rigorous Penalties. However deprav'd our Manners may be, yet if those Plays were Acted now, which were represented in the days of the Fathers, there's hardly any body so Prostituted as not to be Scandaliz'd at them. And none but the most abandon'd Dregs of the Common People, would dare to fiew their Faces at them. Some few Words, with too much Liberty, which now and then escap'd our Italian Comedians, and some Licences they took, rais'd an Alarm and a Clamour against them, which continued

nued till at last they were utterly forbidd. It is no wonder therefore that the holy Fathers were so Nice and Severe on this Head. But nothing can follow from thence against our Stage at present, for there is no Resemblance ; as appears plainly from the expressions they use in their Invectives. Those Assemblies were Assemblies of Impurity, where the most Infamous things were to be seen ; where the Comedians Represented every thing without Shame or Reserve, in the most Scandalous and naked Postures ; where Women, laying aside all Modesty acted in the view of the whole World, what the most Abandon'd scarcely venture now to do in their own Chambers ; and even young Women, like Professors of a Science, gave Lectures of Impudicity to those who had yet no knowledge, nor any use, of those Rules of Abomination. The more vehement those Declamations are, the less Force or Consequence they have against our Modern Comedians, who Act nothing that's obscene, nor with indecent Postures. The least wantonness or liberty, or even an Equivocal Expression, which might have an ill meaning, would be reason enough for Hissing the Play, and forbidding the Actors

Actors. If our Actions are not Chaster than those of the Ancients, yet at least our Language is more Modest. So that it is easy to see that there is no Resemblance between their Plays and Ours ; and that, if the Fathers exclaim'd in so strong and Bloody terms against them, it was because in those days they were truely Criminal and Infamous. For their Comedians to Act on the open Theatre, intirely Naked, was very ordinary ; to satisfy the Wild and Licentious Curiosity of an Impure People who in the Mean time, were so sensible of its being a Scandalous thing, that *Cato*, coming one day to see a Play, he was told, that the Romans, in his presence, durst not desire the young Women and Boys to be brought naked on the Stage. So he went out, and left them to their brutal Pleasure. It was a great Proof of the Reputation of *Cato*, for whom they had more Regard than for their own Conscience and Virtue, against which they were sensible they were Acting. For those Impurities, and even for horrible Blasphemies to which their Excess led them, Comedians were Condemn'd in Ancient Councils, and solemnly Excommunicated, that the Christians might

might have no Commerce with them, nor go into their Assemblies.

But Comedy in it self, and separated from those Circumstances that rendred it so odious and Abominable to the Fathers, may be considered as a thing purely Indifferent. But the Corruption of the best things is most dangerous ; and they become most Criminal, when they are abused. The same Herbs and Juices, which make the most Excellent Cordials and Remedies, become the most pernicious Poysons, when they are prepared after another Manner. How is Religion it self and Devotion abused, to the most Villanous Designs and Impieties ? Divertisement and Recreation is as necessary to unbend and refresh our Minds as nourishment, from time to time, is to support our Bodies. And it is only the Corruption of the Heart of Man, that depraves a thing, in it self so Innocent as Comedy is. Those who lay so much weight on the Authority of the Fathers in this Point, do not consider that they Declaim'd with the same Force and Vehemence against Feasting, against the Luxury of Cloathes, against the Magnificence of Buildings and Furniture. Yet no Body at present makes any Scruple

of being well Lodg'd, of Eating and Drinking well and with our Friends, of wearing good Cloathes, provided we do not Squander our Estates in those things, and that we use them Moderate-ly, according to our Circumstances and Condition. Why may we not Reason in the same manner as to Plays? Such as contain nothing that encroaches either on good Manners, or Govern-ment, or Religion, but on the contra-ry, are fram'd for the Reformation of the Weaknesses of Mankind, are not only Innocent but useful Amusements. The very first Design of Comedy was openly and freely to Censure the Vices of the Greatest Men of *Athens*. *Ari-stophanes*, who excell'd in his Art, Signally abused it, to expose *Socrates* (against whom he had taken a preju-dice) to the Derision of the *Athenians*, who were Bubled by that and other Artifices of his Enemies to con-de-mn him to Death, tho' he was the Wisest and best Man of their Republick. Thus, what was at first de-sign'd and Instituted for the Good of Mankind, and to reform their Manners, was very soon Corrupted, and made use of to the most Pernicious Ends.

Ends and Practices. But where is the thing in this World, that cannot be Corrupted? And if Comedy has been abused, it is the fault of the Comedians, who make so ill an use of an Innocent Profession; and they ought to be Punished, as a Physician, who should employ all his Art and his Time, only for the Making of Poysons.

But our Modern Comedians cannot be accused of Abuses of this Nature. Their Lives are Prudent and Circumspect, as their Plays are Clean and Unblameable. They gain the good will and esteem of the Greatest of the Court, to whose Tables and Divertisements they are admitted. Nothing in themselves or their Profession, more than any other, to do mischief to Mankind. And tho' there are some Canons of Councils, and some Ancient Rituals, which forbid to Administer the Sacraments to Comedians, yet those Censures are only design'd against the Scandalous Comedians of those times, whose Plays were a Reproach to the Profession, and fill'd with Impurity and Brutal Obscenities.

These are the Reasons, Madam, which are generally given by the Pa-

rrons of the Stage. But its Enemies are Intractable, and understand no Rallery in those Matters. They Roar and Thunder against Comedies and Comedians, and Damn them without Mercy. They overlay them with a Heap of Passages taken from the Fathers and the Councils, and from the Scripture it self which are so many Anathemas pronounced against the Stage. They consider it as the Immediate occasion of Sin, since there we find every thing that can Charm either the Eyes or the Ears, or seduce the Heart. The very Design is, to raise those Passions, which our Weakness can neither Calm nor Resist. It begun by Superstition, was Refined by Pleasure, and has been Maintain'd by Politique. It Was Invented in imitation of those Recitals, which were made to the Praise of their Gods and they favour still of this Superstitious Original, Dancing which is now so necessary on the Stage, comes from the same Fountain. At first it was Natural, to express an Innocent Joy. But as we refine in every thing, it became to be an Art; and Infinity of new Steps and Motions have been Invented, which

being very Nice and Agreeable, can not be perform'd but by a very few, and these Motions contribute not a little to corrupt our thoughts, by the Life and Vivacity of those Postures, which are the chief Beauty of Dancing.

One Reason why the Fathers declaim'd against the Stage, was because there was such perpetual Mention of their False Gods, and every thing had a Tincture of that false Religion of the Heathens. Now this is Practis'd still, to this very day, in several Plays; as in *Amphytrion*, where *Jupiter* and *Mercury* disguise themselves in human shape, to commit an Adultery.

The whole Retinue, and all that Accompanies Comedy, is dangerous. The Magnificence of the show; the Air of Luxury, and Love and Pleasure; the Dress of the Comedians; the Musick; the Dancing; the Company; all this dazles the Eyes of young People, and leaves such Impressions on their Minds, as give reason enough to Condemn the use of Plays.

The *Lacedemonians*, who valued themselves on the Strictness of their Morality, would never admit the use of

Comedy into their Republick, lest it should soften their Courage, or alter the Purity of their manners. *Solon* us'd to say, to this purpose, that if they once admitted Falsehood in their Shows, it would soon insinuate it self into their Conversation, and Commerce, and all their other affairs.

When Comedians were received into the Christian Church, they were obliged to renounce their Profession; and if they resum'd it after their Baptism, they were Excommunicated. They were considered as Infamous, and were not received as Accusers or Witnesses. St. *Louis*, who was full of Zeal for true Piety, turn'd all the Comedians out of his Kingdom, as a pernicious set of People, who were capable to corrupt the Manners of his Subjects. If some Saints or Doctors have approv'd or allow'd of Comedy, it was because at that time, it was so plain and simple, without Art or Form, that one had more reason to fear, it would be Nauseous than either Hurtful or Delightful.

Come-

Comedy, like Painting, has had its various Seasons and Vicissitudes. There have been times, when the Painter's were so Ignorant and Unskillful, that after they had finished a Picture, they were obliged to write above it, *This is a Man: Or, This is a Horse.* So Comedy, at some times consisted only in some simple Recitals. The Subject was the Martyrdom of some Saint, or some such thing, full of Devotion. No Ornaments, nor Cloathes, nor Decorations. The Ladies did not Dress, to go to those Meetings. Nothing to excite any other Passion but that of Piety and Devotion. The Face of Affairs is entirely altered. And now all that is to be seen in the Play-house, can have no other End but to excite a sensual Pleasure in the Spectators, and to lay Nets for their Virtue. This is the Reason why several Doctors, who are not othewise too Rigid or Severe, think it a Mortal Sin to go to a Comedy. For tho' our Plays are very much reform'd, and Purify'd from a great deal of Dross and Corruption, yet they think them still very dangerous, because they are full of such Sentiments

as are very capable to soften our Virtue, and to inspire us with Love and all the other Passions.

Tho' Princes and Magistrates tolerate or encourage Plays, by a kind of Politick, we have no reason to conclude from thence that it is Lawfull before God. Many ill things and disorders, are Conniv'd at and Tolerated in a State; either because it would be very difficult to apply a Remedy to those Robust Vices, as *Tacitus* calls them, or because still there's some Advantage in them to the Publick tho' there are also Inconveniencies. Human Laws consider chiefly those Crimes which are contrary to Human Society. Robbing, Stealing, False Witnessing, Murder, Perjury and Rebellion. If other things that are truly ill are permitted, It is, that Men abusing themselves in lesser faults, may not abandon themselves to greater Disorders. But the Political Complaisance of the Magistrate does not Dispense with the Law of God, which condemns every Sin, and every occasion of Sinning; Such as Comedy is, which renders the Spectator more sensual in his Inclinations, and leads him insensibly to forget God.

God. Love, and the other Passions that reign on the Stage, tho' ne'r so delicately handled, give impure Thoughts and Impressions, which are directly opposite to the strictness of Christian Morality Those who boast that they can go to a Play, and come home again, without feeling any harm or any ill impression, may be very much mistaken in the matter, for the reason of this may be, because their imagination was already so much Infected, that a new Representation can make but little Addition. Only that it continues and hardens them in a Sensual State and Disposition.

Those declared Enemies of the Stage require an absolute Obedience and Regard to the Decisions of Christian Councils, which have fulminated severely against Comedians. The Council of *Elvira*; The Council of *Arles*; the Council of *Carthage*. All against them. The Fathers of the Church Preach'd and Wrote, to the same purpose. And even the Digest of the Civil Law treats them as infamous.

The

The Partisans of the Stage acknowledge that both the Fathers and Councils were extreamly Zealous against Comedies ; But still they pretend that no Consequence can be drawn from thence against our Modern Theatre, where all Decency is observ'd, and all Liberty and Obscenity utterly banish'd. They say that at present , Comedy is not only not a School of Immorality, but that on the contrary, it is in a great Measure a School of Virtue, And contributes very much to the Reformation of Manners by exposing the Crimes and Weaknesses of Mankind to Censure and Derision. This Satirical way of painting our Faults to the Life, makes, for the most part, a greater Impression than the longest Sermons, or the most serious Exhortations. How well soever we may love our Vices, yet no man loves to be Ridiculous.

Madam, I leave you to Choose what side you'll take, after you have examined the Reasons of both Parties. It would be to no purpose to tell you plainly what I think in this matter. To so great a Judge as you are, My Opinion ought to be of no great weight ; and

and I never Love to give Decisions, unless where I can do it with the utmost Evidence and Certainty. But if you will Absolutely have me to speak to you according to my Heart, I believe truly Madam, that Christians are obliged to abstain from Plays, as from many other Pleasures. We must carry so many Precautions with us, to preserve our Innocence, that the surest way is to Renounce those Tentations interely.

The first time I have the Honour to see you, we may resume this Subject into our Consideration, if you are not already Rebuted with so long and dry a Letter.

I am with Profound Respect,

Madam,

Tours, &c.

F I N I S.

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